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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY  
OF FOUR PRIMARY SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS'  
PERCEPTIONS OF THE CONTENT OF THEIR  
DAILY WORKLOAD

WILLIAM HARRISON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements of  
the Council for National Academic Awards  
for the degree of Master of Philosophy

Middlesex Polytechnic

July 1990

# An Exploratory Study of Four Primary School Headteachers' Perceptions of the Content of their Daily Workload.

William Harrison

## ABSTRACT

The investigation was an exploratory study, using case study method, of four instances of primary school headship as it occurs in everyday practice from the headteacher's perspective. The study was based on four headteachers' perceptions of the activities which made up their workload on five working days over a period of six months.

The investigation's principal research instrument was a specially designed diary, with additional data collected by questionnaire and semi-structured interview. Under examination were the implications of the use of data collected by diary, questionnaire and interview in that they are in the medium of language which mediates data in specific ways and raises the question of subjectivity. The examination of the four headteachers' written and spoken discourse used first person pronouns as a linguistic indicator of personal involvement (after Chafe and Danielwicz 1987) and consequently a measure of subjectivity.

The four headteachers recorded themselves as having carried out 524 discernible activities during the five working days studied. The activities, and other diary data, demonstrated the breadth and complexity of the headteacher's workload and identified in depth the unique features of the four instances of headship as perceived and recorded by the headteachers themselves.

Findings show the headteacher to be located at the centre of a complex social network of expectations, responsibilities, choices, etc., which results in the everyday workload being contextually generated and interpreted by the individual headteacher in a particular way. Analysis of data shows the headteacher's job to be multi-dimensional, demanding, complex and at times ambiguous; all of which makes it difficult to describe the job in conventional managerial and leadership terms, though they are at times applicable at a general level.

The model of primary school headship to emerge from the investigation's accumulative findings depicts the essential subjective character of the job as

a continuous process of personal interpretation and influence.

The emergent model explains the need for interpretation, the process of interpretation, and the expression of the interpretation as a process of personal influence which aims to bring clarity, coherence and commitment to the school's multifarious purposes.



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## P R E F A C E

### Definition of terms used to describe schools for children of primary age.

The investigation is concerned with primary school headship in state (county) schools. It is important to give a general definition of a primary school at the outset of the investigation in order to avoid the confusion that can arise from the use of the terms primary, infant and junior to describe schools for children between the ages of five and eleven years.

A primary school is for children between five and eleven years of age, and is sometimes referred to as a Junior Mixed and Infant (J.M.&I.) school. By law children must start primary school from the beginning of the school term following their fifth birthday and they transfer to secondary school in the September after they reach the age of eleven. However, the local education authority in which the investigation was carried out (the Inner London Education Authority) allowed children to start school at the beginning of the term in which they reach the age of five ("Rising Five").

Within the Inner London Education Authority there were some separate infant schools (I.) for children up to the age of seven and separate junior schools (J.M.) which children start in the September after they reach the age of seven and transfer to secondary school in the September after they become eleven years of age. These separate infant and junior schools are sometimes referred to as primary schools.

Three categories of headteachers who participated in the overall investigation.

The research was carried out between 1985 and 1987 in county primary schools (for boys and girls) situated within the Inner London Education Authority (I.L.E.A.). The I.L.E.A. was responsible for twelve inner London boroughs and the City of London, and was divided administratively into ten divisions which corresponded closely to the inner London borough boundaries. Under Section 162 of the Education Reform Act 1988 the I.L.E.A. was abolished and from 1st April 1990 responsibility for education was taken over by the London boroughs. All data had been collected and analysed before the abolition of the I.L.E.A. and the investigation was written up in final draft form.

The investigation's involvement with a total of twelve primary school headteachers developed in three distinct stages - pilot study, diary pilot study and principal participants - with four different headteachers participating at each of the three stages. The four headteachers who took part in the diary pilot study and the four principal participants all worked within the same I.L.E.A. administrative division; this division corresponds to one of the inner London boroughs and for the purpose of the present investigation it is given the fictitious name of Chesley. The four headteachers who took part in the pilot study worked in I.L.E.A. schools, but their schools were not within the borough of Chesley.

The following summary shows how the twelve primary school headteachers participated in the investigation, their type of primary school, and the overall time scale for the collection of data.

Pilot study. Data collected between August 1985 and April 1986 from four headteachers who did not work within the borough of Chesley.

Four headteachers took part in a series of informal exploratory conversations and correspondence with the headteacher/researcher during 1985-86. These four headteachers are referred to throughout the investigation as Pilot Headteachers.

Pilot Headteacher 1 - primary school.

Pilot Headteacher 2 - primary school with  
nursery class.

Pilot Headteacher 3 - infant school with  
nursery class.

Pilot Headteacher 4 - primary school.

Diary pilot study. Carried out between October and December 1986 and involved four headteachers working within the borough of Chesley.

Originally six headteachers agreed to take part in the diary pilot study. However only four finally took part (because of illness and a non-response) and these four headteachers are referred to as Diary Pilot Headteachers.

Diary Pilot Headteacher 1 - junior school.

Diary Pilot Headteacher 2 - junior school.

Diary Pilot Headteacher 3 - infant school with  
nursery class.

Diary Pilot Headteacher 4 - primary school with  
nursery class.

Principal Participants.

Data collected between October  
1986 and July 1987.

Four primary school headteachers (J.M.&I.) took part in the main study and they all worked in the borough of Chesley. Throughout the investigation these headteachers are referred to as **Headteacher 1, 2, 3, and 4** and their schools have been given the fictitious names of Stratton, Oldfield, Pottersview and Deanway respectively. Each of the four primary schools had a nursery class and **Headteacher 1** had responsibility for a Language Delay Unit catering for 20 children.

Current legislation in relation to the investigation.

It is important to note that the only aspects of the Education (No.2) Act 1986 to be in effect at school level while data were being collected were the Governors' Annual Report (Section 30) and the annual meeting for parents (Section 31) to discuss the report and the running of the school generally. The Teachers' pay and Conditions Act 1987 did not come into force until October 1987, after all data had been collected. The Education Reform Act 1988 came into force after data collection had been fully completed.



## CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: the issues to be addressed and the aim and of the investigation.

The investigation's principal aim and its empirical origin.

As part of his response to a request for a description of his job as headteacher of a primary school, one of the participants in the present investigation wrote:

"The job is enormous, vague and never completed."

The investigation originated in the headteacher/researcher's need for a clearer and more analytical understanding of primary school headship in order to meet the changing, complex and sometimes difficult demands of the job. This need was shared by four fellow headteachers who took part in a series of informal exploratory conversations and correspondence with the headteacher/researcher during 1985-86.

The informal exploratory conversations and correspondence cannot be viewed as systematic research, though they did accumulate to form a small but useful pilot study for the present investigation. (N.B. the headteachers involved in the pilot study are in no way associated with the four headteachers who took part in the main study or those who took part in the diary pilot study. See Preface for clarification.)

The pilot study helped to identify the need for, and the focus of, the present investigation.

The four headteachers who took part in the pilot study are referred to throughout the investigation as Pilot Headteachers:-

Pilot Headteacher 1 - primary school, nine years experience of headship.

Pilot Headteacher 2 - primary school with nursery class, one year's experience.

Pilot Headteacher 3 - infant school with nursery class, ten years experience.

Pilot Headteacher 4 - primary school, eight year's experience.

Informal conversations with three fellow headteachers (Pilot Headteachers 1,2 and 3) revealed that they found some aspects of their job difficult, sometimes causing them dissatisfaction and stress. The headteacher/researcher took this up in a more systematic way by writing to his colleagues (Pilot Headteachers 1 and 3 in August 1985 and Pilot Headteachers 2 and 4 in November 1985) asking them to jot down, briefly, a note of any area/s of the job which they found difficult, together with their comments. (It was at this point that Pilot Headteacher 4 , who was not known to the headteacher/researcher, joined in the exercise at the invitation of Pilot Headteacher 2). All four headteachers responded; Pilot Headteacher 2 provided two pages of notes and the other three headteachers' responses took the form of a letter. The following are quotations from the four headteachers' written correspondence:

"I left the Infant classroom where I was very happy and successful because I wanted to organise a successful learning environment for more children. I feel I am not as successful as I would like because I need to spend more time now fielding the demands lobbed at the school from all directions - the Government, the L.E.A.re management and the curriculum, the community especially parents, from the Governors and from staff, both teaching and support staff."

Pilot Headteacher 1 - (20.8.85)  
with nine years of primary school  
headship.

"Trying to decide which of the many tasks which confronted me was a priority. There were so many things that needed to be tackled but some were issues that had to be mentally filed away as to tackle them there and then would have led to alienating the staff"

Pilot Headteacher 2 - (27.11.85)  
reflecting on one year's experience  
of primary school headship.

"Main problem - frustration! Arises from other secondary problems, including personal ones. ....I suppose they could be summed up as the problem of developing a viable and effective management structure so that organisational and practical issues can be dealt with quickly and efficiently and the real business of looking at what the children are learning and how they can learn it better can become the major preoccupation. What mitigates against this is partly one's own problems and lack of expertise as a manager....."

Pilot Headteacher 3- (8.9.85)  
with ten years' experience of  
infant headship.

"Time is probably the major problem but then my own personality is all mixed up in that as I know I don't organise my own time properly.

Time for children.

Time for parents.

Time for staff.

Time for outside agencies.

In what proportion  
should this be put?

Time for curriculum planning, for organisation, for future developments - I'm so bogged down by day-to-day happenings that I'm forgetting the overall view.

Industrial action causing lack of communications i.e. no staff meetings since January - the school stands still without dialogue.

Conflict caused by personal views versus professional responsibilities.

I have too many fingers in too many pies - I'm not good at saying "no".

I think I'll stop there. It's not that there aren't any more problems, it's just that I run the risk of revealing the darker side of my soul to a complete stranger!"

Pilot Headteacher 4 - (26.11.85)  
with eight years experience of primary headship.

These comments made by the four headteachers identify the substance of the headteacher's job as a wide range of competing tasks and expectations (with resultant problems, frustrations and conflicts), and they also imply something of the personal nature of many aspects of the job as it is seen from the practising headteacher's point of view.

The written correspondence was extended with Pilot Headteachers 2 & 4 who responded to further requests for details of the three things (if any) that they found most difficult or problematic in three given weeks - 2nd December 1985; 12th January 1986 and 3rd March 1986 - and their comments as to why they found these things difficult or problematic.

Information gathered from all the written correspondence shows that :-

1. Each of the four headteachers interpreted the job in an individual and personal way (though there are similarities).

2. The four headteachers found aspects of their everyday job difficult and that most of the difficulties were, in one way or another, related to

(a) the volume of work and the range of tasks in relation to the time available, and /or

(b) the ambiguous and personal nature of the job from the headteacher's perspective.

The changing nature of primary school headship.

The investigation is based on the premise that primary school headship is a changing phenomenon and is becoming an increasingly difficult and complicated job. This view is supported by Circular No. 3/83 (The In-Service Teacher Training Grants Scheme, Department of Education and Science, March 1983) which sets out plans for grants for headteacher training:-

'The Secretary of State sees a pressing need for headteachers and other senior teachers carrying out management functions to be better equipped for their increasingly difficult and complicated tasks.'

A quotation from the government publication Better Schools serves to show the multiplicity and complexity of the changes which have resulted in primary school headship becoming infinitely more complex and more difficult:-

'First, economic, social and demographic changes have profoundly altered the circumstances under which schools have to do their work.  
.....British society has become more complex and diverse; values and institutions are increasingly

called into question; the pace of technological change has quickened; and unemployment has added to the pressures of a daily life which has become more precarious and sometimes more turbulent. Second, the schools have been expected to expand the range of their tasks, as a result of their material and moral environment. They have had to cope with conflicting views about how their tasks should alter. There has been neither clarity nor agreement about priorities among the many aims they set for themselves and those which others set for them.'

(H.M.S.O., Comnd 9469, 1985, para 3.)

The changing nature of primary headship, and headship generally, is well summed up in the following statement from Clerkin (in Craig, editor) 1987, page 19:

'Without doubt the role of the head has changed significantly in recent years. According to Morgan, Hall and Mackay (1983) various factors have brought about this change, including the development of new power bases within the school coupled with the increasing demands for accountability already referred to. Consequently, the authors argue, heads in the 1980s can no longer promote their policies without contest or impose their values without bargaining or compromise. Clearly the heads traditional role has been modified from determining policy to leading the policy formation process. As a result, leadership is now more concerned with dialogue focusing on the teacher's view as well as the head's. A collegial strategy, therefore, based on open negotiations is likely to be the most effective means at present of securing the enthusiastic commitment of staff in the preparation of job descriptions.'

Changes in legislation over the past fifteen years - the various Education Acts and their resultant new regulations - are seen by a chair of governors (of a middle school and governor of a first and a secondary school) as the Secretary of State for Education and Science's "legislative diarrhoea":

'Fifteen years ago I was a non-swimmer in the education pool, thrown in at the deep end. Necessity and an excellent headteacher enabled me to keep afloat until I had learnt to swim in the 1944 Education Act style, and at the same time make my first priority the well-being of staff and pupils, and the education of the latter.'

But now I feel I'm sinking as wave after wave of Education Acts and new regulations take up more of my time and effort. Today I feel my priority has become paper rather than people. If I felt the deluge of regulations was giving our children a better education, I would have hope as well as despair."

Guy BENNETT, The Times Educational Supplement,  
1.1.1988

And there are further major changes brought about by the Education Reform Act 1988. During the period in which the present investigation was researched and written up, the Education Reform Act 1988 was conceived, introduced to Parliament and became law. The Act came into force after data collection had been fully completed. However, the implications of the Act - though they will not be fully understood until sometime after the completion of the present investigation - are pertinent to the study and are discussed in Chapters Two and Nine.

Harry GRAY (1987) sees the job of the headteacher becoming less attractive and more complex

'The job of headteacher today is more likely to be a thankless, pressurised, political (especially in some areas), and controversial one driving many of them to the verge of early retirement. And things are likely to get worse because headteachers will be expected to perform more and more like industrial, or rather commercial, managers with schools becoming increasingly under pressure from a variety of contradictory clients, customers and patrons.'

Management in Education, volume 1, No.3,  
page 11

On the question of early retirement ,raised by Gray above, the National Association of Headteachers sent a questionnaire to 481 headteachers who had retired between January and August 1988. 353 headteachers responded and the key points arising from the survey are reproduced below from the N.A.H.T. Press Release dated 25th November 1988:

1. The largest number of headteachers retired because of the pressure of the job/stress.117 (or 33.1%) came into this category.
2. Although primary school headteachers comprised 77.1% of the total responses they formed 84.6% of those who retired on grounds of pressure /stress. Secondary school headteachers formed 18.7% of the cohort but 12.0% of the headteachers who gave pressure/stress as a reason for leaving.
3. Compared with the total number of respondents in each sector of education, 36.4% of primary school headteachers and 21.2% of secondary school headteachers retired for pressure/stress reasons.
4. Pressure/stress led to 77.8% of all those who retired in this category going before the age of 60 and 24.0% retiring before 55.



5. Some 45 (12.8%) left the profession because of "disillusionment" with education reforms, the changing nature of the job or the policies of the local education authorities. This means that a total of 162 (45.9%) of all respondents retired in the first eight months of the year because of pressure, stress or disillusionment.

The N.A.H.T. felt that the survey revealed a disturbing picture in that 162 (or 45.9%) of all respondents who retired in the first eight months of 1988 did so because of pressure, stress or disillusionment. Only 35 (21.6%) of that cohort retired at the age of 60 or over, which meant that some 78.4% of all those headteachers retiring for such reasons left their jobs before the normal age of retirement.

This introductory chapter of the investigation may appear to have so far dwelt on the negative aspects of primary school headship. In the four reflective accounts of primary school headship experience presented in Chapter Four the respondents were asked about a wide range of topics, including the satisfactions and enjoyable aspects of the job.

#### Primary school headship as distinct from a general concept of headship.

A search of the literature yielded no clear and detailed explanation of primary school headship as it occurs in everyday practise from the headteacher's perspective. There are relatively few texts specifically to do with primary school headship though there was a marked increase during the 1980's. The texts which do exist are of a general and prescriptive nature, primarily concerned with what primary school headship "ought to be". The nearest thing to an empirical account of primary school headship is a descriptive case study (Wolcott, 1973) of the principalship of an elementary school in Oregon, U.S.A. However, because of the differences between the American and British

education systems the study, while providing valuable insights at methodological and general levels, has limitations in its relevance to the present investigation.

Beyond the relatively few texts which deal specifically with primary school headship there is often a problem in identifying primary school headship as something distinct from a general concept of headship, which, as it is used, implies that primary, secondary and other types of headship are similar. For example, Everard (1986) in the preface to his book Developing Management in Schools, page vii, acknowledges that there is a difficulty in writing for a mixed readership in primary, special, independent and secondary schools and states: "Rather than keep inserting provisos, I shall rely on the reader to discern what is particular to the various types of school and what is general to all." It is felt that such an approach is side-stepping the real problem and that the text - because of its generality and prescriptive nature - is of limited value to the practicing primary school headteacher. It is interesting to note that Everard's fieldwork involved a total of 20 schools : 18 secondary schools (of various kinds), a girls' independent with pupils 11 to 16, and an infant school.

One example of the limitation of Everard's text to the primary headteacher is the question of the curriculum's centrality in primary school headship. The principal way in which the primary school headteacher pursues her or his goals and sets the essential character of the school (i.e. in consultation with, and through, others) is via the curriculum (Coulson, 1986). However, Everard has no section on managing the curriculum and the index of the book lists only four brief references to the curriculum. By contrast, two books specifically on primary school headship, Whitaker (1983) and Day et al (1985), have substantial sections on managing the curriculum. Dean (1987) in her book Managing the Primary School states:-

"The major purpose of the school is for children to learn. The most important management task for the senior staff is therefore the formulation of the curriculum and the management of learning."

Like Whitaker and Day et al, Dean devotes a substantial part of her text to the curriculum and the management of learning.

Coulson (1986) page 7 in making comparisons between his own primary school headship research and Webb & Lyons' (1982) work on secondary school headship - both are adaptation of Mintzberg (1973) - makes the following observation (though it is not substantiated):-

"Whereas secondary school heads tend to be more occupied with organisational matters than their primary school counterparts, the teaching and curriculum aspects of the primary heads' work normally loom larger in their scale of priorities."

It is proposed that primary schools and primary school headship are fundamentally different from secondary schools and secondary school headship - and to varying degrees different from other types of schools (special, for example) and other kinds of headship.

Some of the fundamental differences between primary and secondary schools - with implications for some of the differences between the two kinds of headship - can be understood in considering some general observations about the two types of organisation. For example:-

- (a) A difference in size of organisation; communication for example.
- (b) Primary schools are more open to parents on a day-to-day basis - e.g. young children are brought to school by their parents and this generally promotes a good deal of parental involvement in the school.

- (c) The different ways in which teaching and learning are organised, carried out and evaluated.
- (d) The differences between the characteristics and needs of young children and teenagers.
- (e) Some external demands are different (e.g. the secondary school examination system) and influence the organisation.
- (f) There is little opportunity for the primary school headteacher to delegate.
- (g) Often the primary headteacher is the only person with discretionary time and thus the job is largely of a reactive nature with less time for planned work than is needed. (See Pilot Headteachers' comments above.)

The fundamental difference between primary and secondary schools is seen by Handy (1984) and Handy & Aitken (1986) as essentially to do with a difference of cultures. A quotation from Handy's 1984 study of a group of primary and secondary schools serves to illustrate this difference of culture and some of the issues which underpin it.

"When they (teachers) look at their organizations, however, the ideal is not always there, but there is a big difference between primary and secondary schools. The primary schools were scored on the questionnaires as almost pure task cultures, although observation would suggest that in some cases a benevolent club culture would have been a more appropriate description. They were small enough for either. Each teacher had their own "job shop" or year group which, interestingly, was itself usually organized in task groups of children in groups, not rows. Communication between staff in primary schools is very personal and informal, even telepathic across the classroom or in the passageway.

Secondary schools on the other hand were scored with a predominance of the role culture. They were big, the work flow was very interdependent with the time-table or

operations plan a major feature, responsibility was divided up by function (academic and pastoral, year tutor or subject teacher) and there were arrays of systems, co-ordinating procedures and committee meetings. Only the very junior teachers saw the secondary school as a person or task culture in which they were left alone to get on with their own thing. Those in the middle ranks also perceived there to be a club culture on top of the role culture, the head and deputies: a web on top of the boxes."

Primary school headship as something more than "management"; the complexity and enormity of the job.

The investigation views primary school headship as something more than "management" as it is generally defined. However, it is appreciated that the "something more" may be difficult to quantify, but by means of exploratory study the present investigation aims to give the reader a greater understanding of the complexity and enormity of primary school headship in everyday practice as perceived by the incumbent headteacher.

Conventional models of management borrowed from industry and commerce are often, and sometimes glibly (Gammage in Day et al 1985), applied to primary school headship as a consequence of their application to secondary schools in recent years. One of the Industrial Society's Management in Schools publications, The Leadership of Schools by Trethowen (1984), is an example of this, as is the example of Everard discussed above.

The following propositions are pertinent to the investigation and they contributed towards the construction of the study's theoretical framework which is set out at the beginning of Chapter Three.

1. Primary school headship is something more than conventional management and administration.
2. Primary schools are different from other organisations (and different from secondary schools)

though there are some similarities (Handy and Aitken 1986, page 34 and Bush 1986, page 5).

3. Conventional management models as applied to primary schools (for example Trethowan 1984) are prescriptive rather than descriptive and are therefore of limited value in that they deal only with known generalities and promote an over-simplified and restricted view of primary school headship as it exists in everyday practice.
4. The values , complexities and wide range of tasks which permeate the aims and the day-to-day functioning of a primary school are not compatible with conventional management (Fielding in Maw et al, 1984).

Clegg (1980), page 101, who was Chief Education Officer for the West Riding of Yorkshire 1945 to 1974, makes a pertinent point when he states that a good headteacher

"Can manage the administration of the school without forsaking the substance of headmastering for the shadow of management."

Clegg is speaking of headship generally, but in this short quote he reveals one factor that could be seen to make headship something more than management and administration - namely headmastering, or rather "headteaching". Headteaching could be seen to be a concept similar to Coulson's (1986) notion of the primary school headteacher's Leading Professional Roles which is discussed in Chapter Two.

Following the publication of D.E.S. Circular 3/83 (The In-service Teacher Training Grants Scheme) and the introduction of government-backed training for headteachers, Maw et al(1984) published a critique of the new training initiative. Fielding(in Maw et al )criticises what he sees as the commercial and industrial type of methods of

management being promoted as suitable for schools:-

"A commercially -inspired managerial imperative is more likely to betray rather than enhance the specifically educational nature of our schools. It is likely to do so because its network of values, its accustomed focus and its characteristic style of operation are in various ways destructive and are quite out of step with current progressive educational thinking. .... It is also dangerously misconceived in its moral ambivalence, alarmingly insensitive in its championing of manipulation as a kind of managerial microchip, and tenaciously myopic, in its pursuit of hierarchy."

Another writer in the Maw et al volume, Young, points out the complexity of schools in the 1980s and the increasing number of functions that schools are called upon to fulfil. Young sees these and other factors (e.g. the manifold objectives of education not being well defined and staff performing multiple roles) as making the application to schools of conventional management skills as found in industry and commerce "difficult but not insuperable". The content of the twenty day and one-term courses for headteachers arising from Circular 3/83 is discussed in Chapter Two.

The Open University booklet Management in Education -Dissimilar or Congruent? (Management in Education Unit 1, E321 1, 1978) discusses the question of whether school management is different from management in other organisations and reaches the conclusion that the question cannot be answered in a "yes-no" way. The booklet concludes that one needs to consider "what is uniquely brought to the management function by the particular occupational context".

Handy and Aitken (1986) hold that, though there are similarities, schools are different from, and more complex than, other organisations and that the differences tend to make schools more difficult to run. Handy and Aitken discuss four categories of principal differences between schools and other organisations: there is not enough time or opportunity for management; schools have too many functions to fulfil and no simple way of measuring success; management

ability is often taken for granted in the way that teachers switch to being headteachers; and the most distinguishing feature of schools is perhaps the children and the dilemma of whether to treat them as co-operating workers, as clients, or as some kind of products which are shaped and developed by the organisation.

Bush (1986) states that there<sup>are</sup> six major areas in which the management of educational institutions differs markedly from the management of other organisations: the objectives of educational institutions are much more difficult to define than the purposes of commercial organisations: it is very difficult to measure whether or not the objectives have been achieved in education; the presence of children and young people as the focal points of educational institutions leads to additional sources of ambiguity; the managers and teachers in schools are from a common professional background with shared values, training and experience; there is a fragmented organisational and management structure both within and impinging upon educational institutions; and many of the senior and middle managers in schools have little time for the managerial aspects of their work.

In conventional managerial terms the manager's job can be broadly defined as "deciding what should be done and then getting other people to do it" (Stewart 1985). A longer definition would be concerned with how these two tasks are to be accomplished - e.g. setting objectives, planning (including decision-making), setting up the formal organisation, motivating, communicating, controlling and the development of people.

It is proposed that the primary school headteacher's job is multi-dimensional, complex, and often without easily quantifiable content and outcomes, or clearly definable boundaries. This situation basically stems from the fact that primary (and other) schools are faced with a wide range of tasks (pedagogical, custodial, a socializing function,



legal and administrative obligations, demands for accountability, parent and community involvement) that are at times ambiguous, conflicting and with no simple way of measuring success; all of which present the primary school with a major management problem (Handy & Aitken).

An illustration of the multi-dimensional nature and enormity of primary school headship is provided by Dean (1987) - and reproduced below - in the form of a list which outlines the tasks of primary school headteachers and the skills needed to undertake them. It is important to note that Dean (page 19) states that primary school headship involves much more than the list of tasks and skills might suggest, even though the list shows a wide range of tasks and indicates a heavy workload for the primary headteacher.

"As soon as you analyse something into component parts it loses something of its wholeness. Being a headteacher is more than an undertaking a series of tasks, however skilfully you work and you are never dealing with one thing at a time, never working to achieve only one goal. You are at the centre of a very complex series of activities in which each situation and each action contains growth possibilities for a number of goals."

## Tasks and skills of primary school headship.

Tasks	Skills
<b>Aims, objectives and policies</b> Identify aims for the school in consultation with everyone concerned Ensure that the work of the school fulfils the stated aims and that relevant objectives are derived from them Formulate policies in consultation with everyone concerned	Presentation Communication Negotiation Leading discussion Decision-making Evaluation
<b>The curriculum</b> Formulate the curriculum philosophy of the school and work with staff to make it explicit in a programme of work for the children Ensure that parents, children where appropriate, governors and the community are aware of the curriculum philosophy and the curriculum framework of the school Maintain oversight of continuity and encourage development of the curriculum Maintain an overview of the work of the school and ensure coherence	Presentation Communication Negotiation Leading discussion Decision-making Evaluation
<b>The children</b> Ensure that the needs, interests, abilities and stage of development of the children are brought together with the curriculum and that learning takes place Ensure that there is adequate provision for the most and least able Monitor the personal development of each child	Communication Decision-making Evaluation Organisation
<b>Organising learning</b> Organise the school effectively for teaching and learning Deploy staff and other resources effectively Ensure a proper use of time	Decision-making Evaluation Organisation Communication

<b>Managing Change</b> Identify the changes that are needed Assess the situation Work with the school community to plan and implement changes Evaluate the effectiveness of changes	Evaluation Negotiation Leading discussion Planning Organisation Communication
<b>Managing Children's Behaviour</b> Establish a philosophy of care of children Establish and maintain acceptable behaviour patterns Ensure that there is support for the personal and social education of all children Create and maintain record keeping systems	Presentation Communication Negotiation Leading discussion Decision-making Evaluation Organisation
<b>School Administration</b> Oversee the administrative work of the school, including the school office Control the school finances Take responsibility for the school building and the environment, including equipment and resources	Planning Decision-making Administration
<b>Communication</b> Ensure that information is provided on all aspects of the school for staff, children, parents, governors, LEA, earlier and later stages of education, the community Create and maintain communication systems Ensure that information travels upwards, downwards and sideways Seek information and feedback from sample groups at all levels Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of communication in the school	Presentation Communication Negotiation Leading discussion Decision-making Evaluation Problem solving

<b>Staff Selection and Professional Development</b> Organise and assist with staff appointments Establish and maintain a school policy for staff development Create a programme of development for all staff Plan development for the whole staff and for individuals Maintain records for staff and provide any necessary reports on work	Interviewing Administration Evaluation Appraisal Communication Negotiation Planning Organisation
<b>School and Community</b> Establish and maintain relationships with parents, governors, the community, the LEA Ensure that each child experiences continuity between the stages of education Represent the school to the outside world See that people outside the school are given necessary information and consulted when appropriate See that the world outside the school is regarded and used as a resource	Presentation Communication Negotiation Leading discussion Decision-making Evaluation Problem solving Interviewing Administration
<b>Evaluation</b> Assess the current state of the school in all aspects of its life and work including the needs and achievements of children and staff and the means by which teachers and children achieve Create and maintain policies for assessment/evaluation Organise systems of assessment and self-assessment for children, teachers and other staff	Evaluation Administration Communication Planning Organisation

Handy & Aitken sum up the consequences of the multi-dimensionality and enormity of the primary school's functioning and also cite the centrality of the headteacher with their suggestion of autocracy as a possible answer to the many problems that the situation generates for the headteacher.

"It may not be the fault of the schools that they are the repositories of society's hopes and fears, whims and fancies; but it compounds the problems of management, turning the practical into the political, the objective decision into the personal opinion, the committee into a debating chamber and the organisation into a microcosm of society. It is yet another invitation to autocracy as the only alternative to anarchy, the only way of imposing some direction on that swarm of humanity that is your school."

The sources discussed in this introductory chapter, namely

1. the outcomes of the pilot study's informal exploratory conversations and correspondence;
2. Dean's list of tasks which make up the primary school headteacher's job, and
3. other references to the literature on educational management and to government publications,

suggest that primary school headship, by the very nature of the job, often makes demands on the individual headteacher that are situational and necessitate a personal response, even in a democratically run primary school.

In fact the three different sources, empirical and from the literature, imply something of the complexity and enormity of the job as seen from the headteacher's point of view. The primary school headteacher can be conceived, from the headteacher perspective, as being at the centre of a complex network of expectations, demands, needs, choices,

unanticipated issues etc. - involving children, teachers, parents, support staff, governors, L.E.A. personnel and many others - with, as indicated by the four pilot study headteachers, insufficient time to do the job properly, particularly not enough time to focus on curricular and classroom activities.

More so than in the case of conventional management, it is proposed that primary school headship is to do with creating and operationalising through a process of personal influence - i.e. by doing, being and relating - a vision of the school and its everyday functioning. The process of creating and operationalising, which essentially is to do with curriculum and teaching and learning and all that has direct bearing upon their success, is dependent for its substance and practical success on the personal perceptions, goals, values, beliefs and judgement of the individual headteacher and her or his inter-personal skills. The investigation aims to show that there is no blue-print for the job; the job, to a large degree, resides in how the individual headteacher perceives and responds to her or his particular amorphism.

It is the headteacher/researcher's belief that the process of creating and operationalising (i.e. through inter-personal skills) constitutes the essential aspects of primary school headship in practice. Which is not to say that "management " does not have a contribution to make in the search for a more coherent and analytical understanding of the primary school headteacher's everyday workload and the job in general.

The work of Coulson and Gray (1985 & 1986) influenced the construction of the investigation's theoretical perspective and the following quotations illustrate something of their positions in relation to the question of primary school headship as "management".

"The head who becomes too enamoured of, or sidetracked by, managerial aspects of his work - liaison, for

instance, or "administrivia" - separates himself from the prevalent values and priorities of the teacher culture and risks condemnation by fellow heads and teachers alike.

Primary school headship thus hinges less upon some thing called "leadership" or "management" than on the process of leading - of the head's exerting influence in the school setting. Thus, personal influence processes, especially leading by example, occupy a dominant place within the head's management behaviour. His prime task is to create and nurture an organisational culture which is aligned with his vision for his particular school and which,

at the same time is in keeping with the norms and expectations of other interested parties - parents, local authority officials and, especially, teachers."

Coulson, (1986).Page 76

"Teaching and the management of education, are expressions of the individual not techniques learned and correctly repeated."

Gray, (1985a). Page 5

Coulson and Gray perceive headship in terms different from the conventional models of school management and their work is discussed in Chapter Two.

### The objectives of the investigation and the methodology

From the outset primary school headship as it occurs in everyday practice is seen as a complex and difficult phenomenon to describe and study. However, by means of exploratory study the investigation seeks to explore the issues raised in this introductory chapter and present the reader with a greater understanding of the complexity and enormity of the job of primary school headship as perceived by four practising headteachers. It is believed that to understand primary school headship in practice "objectively" one needs to understand the subjective experiences of the individual headteacher. For this reason the headteacher's perceptions and responses are held to be of central

importance in the investigation and the aim of the study is to demonstrate this subjectivity as a means to constructing a better understanding of what the job actually involves from the point of view of those people doing it.

The overall aim of the investigation is to achieve a coherent and analytical understanding of primary school headship as it occurs in everyday practice from the headteacher's perspective.

The objectives are:-

1. To investigate how four primary school headteachers perceive the activities which make up their everyday workload.
2. To explore what might be the essential subjective character, or personal nature, of primary school headship as demonstrated by the investigation's findings.
3. To explore the usefulness of a specially designed diary as an instrument for investigating headteacher's perceptions of the contents of their workload.

The investigation is from a subjective perspective and uses an interpretative micro-sociological methodology consisting of a case study of four primary school headteachers working in similar primary schools within the same local education authority. The methodological approach and research design are discussed in Chapters Three, Four and Five.

The investigation's principal research instrument is a specially designed diary, with additional data collected

by interview and questionnaire. The rationale, purpose and procedure for the use of the diary are the subject of Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER TWO

Primary school headship in the official documents and legislation; a review of the recent literature; and provision for in-service training for primary school headteachers.

As was discussed in Chapter One, a search of the literature yielded no study of primary school headship as it occurs in everyday practice from the practising headteacher's perspective. Also, there are relatively few texts which deal specifically with primary school headship as something distinct from a general concept of headship. Those texts which do deal specifically with primary school headship (and there has been a marked increase in their number during the 1980s - for example, Waters 1979; Jones 1980; Whitaker 1983; Day et al 1985; Craig (editor) 1987; Dean 1987; Bell 1988), while providing useful insights and guidance, are of limited value to the present investigation because they are of a general and prescriptive nature, often viewing things from an ideal or rationalistic perspective which can be very different from primary school headship in everyday practice. Coulson (1986) is an exception in that his work is based on observation of primary school headteachers at work and was carried out by an "informed insider".

The present investigation aims to show that primary school headship in everyday practice is something much more complex and more situationally generated than the literature indicates.

The problem of identifying primary school headship as something distinct from a general concept of headship was also discussed in Chapter One. Everard's (1986) text was used to illustrate the limitations (i.e. for anyone specifically concerned with an examination of primary school headship) of using a general concept of headship and a list of the differences between primary schools and



secondary schools was provided in Chapter One to support the view that the two types of headship are fundamentally different; though there are some similarities.

However, Hall, Mackay and Morgan (1986) made a study of secondary school headteachers at work and this text proved useful to the present investigation and a brief comparison of findings is made in Chapter Six. The study by Hall et al used interview and observation techniques and the text provided useful methodological insights and comparisons.

Brief outline of the emergence and history of primary school education (in England) in the official documents and legislation with reference to primary school headship.

Richards (1984) has compiled a source book for the study of primary school education and a discussion of many of the important theoretical professional issues involved.

The history of primary education can be categorised (roughly) into five chronological phases which are marked by significant legislation and government publications.

Primary education's pre-history up to 1926.

Blyth (extract in Richards) states that English primary education grew mainly, if tardily, out of English elementary education with its characteristic emphasis on the basic skills, and in some ways it can be said to still bear the marks of its ancestry.

1926 to 1944.

The concept of primary education as a phase of education for children below the age of eleven first appeared in The Education of the Adolescent, the Report of the Consultative Committee to the Board of Education 1926. The report is known after its chairman, Sir W. H. Hadow, as the (first) Hadow Report. Section 99 of the Report stated:

'It is desirable that the education up to 11+ should be known by the general name of Primary Education, and education after 11 by the general name of Secondary Education'

However, not until a second report, also under the chairmanship of Sir W. H. Hadow (entitled The Primary School and published in 1931) did attention focus specifically for the first time on primary education. During this period, 1926 to 1944, a specific theoretical approach to primary education - generally termed 'child-centred' or 'progressive' education - began to be formulated and it received official support in Section 75 of the 1931 (second) Hadow Report.

'... the curriculum is to be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored.'

1944 to approx 1970.

The period 1944 to about 1970 saw the universal provision of primary schooling with the implementation of the (Butler) Education Act of 1944. Section 7 of the Act states:

'The statutory system of public education shall be organised in three progressive stages to be known as primary education, secondary education and further education.'

The Act defines primary education (in Section 8) as for children who have not attained the age of twelve.

Joan Sallis (1981) page 3 describes the Education Act of 1944 as follows:

'Despite this ancestry, the 1944 Act will always be seen as a radical and visionary response to post-war needs. Its concept of education as broad as it was long, of progress towards a service meeting new aspirations and removing old inequalities, offering appropriate opportunities throughout life, was its distinction. A dynamic, rather than regulatory role, was given to central government. L.E.A.s have had responsibility to provide not only for free schooling from five to 15 (later 16) in separate primary and secondary schools (secondary education free for the first time), but also to consider the local needs of those under compulsory school age and beyond it, and for culture and recreation. A variety of aids and ancillary services supported the basics.'

The Education Act of 1944 has, essentially, been the foundation of our present education system (i.e. pre-1988 and the Education Reform Act) though there have been many Acts amending or adding to it, which has created a complex and confusing situation for anyone trying to establish which parts of the various Acts still apply, which have been repealed or revised, which have been overtaken by events and which have not yet been implemented. The implementation of the Education Reform Act 1988 will bring further major changes throughout the education system.

The Education Act of 1944 says little about the nature of headship, and the only attempt to define the job of headteacher is contained in the Instruments and Articles of Government which the 1944 Act instructed each local education authority to draw up for the constitution of a governing body (then called a managing body) and the running of the school.

The Articles of Government in operation at the time of the collection of data for the present investigation (1985 - 1987) delegate much of the running of the school to the headteacher, with the Chief Education Officer having the ultimate responsibility for the control of the schools

within the local education authority. The Articles of Government (page 25) state:

'1. The Authority shall determine the general educational character of the school and its place in the Authority's educational system. Subject thereto, the governors shall, in consultation with the headteacher, exercise the oversight of the conduct and curriculum of the school.

2. Subject to the provisions of these articles, the headteacher shall control the conduct and curriculum, the internal organisation, management and discipline of the school, the choice of equipment, books and other resources, the methods of teaching and the general arrangement of teaching groups and shall exercise supervision over the teaching and support staff. The headteacher shall have the power of suspending pupils from attendance ... ..'

As the result of the implications of a plethora of legislation during the 1980s the official definition of the headteacher's job has changed, and the consequences of this are discussed below.

The implementation of the 1944 Act affected the nature of primary school education in a particular way. Selection for the different forms of secondary schooling at 11-plus (e.g. grammar, secondary modern, technical, etc.) became of paramount importance after the implementation of the Act. The selection examination, the '11-plus', normally consisted of 'objective' tests in the three Rs and 'intelligence', and this inevitably provided the main objective for primary school education as a whole, with the spread of streaming. Morrish (1970), page 33, points out the ramifications of this effect of the 1944 Act:

'The act forced a clear break between primary and post-primary education. We are not here immediately concerned with secondary education, but the new set-up in secondary education, the developing tripartite system, put ever-increasing pressures upon primary schools to act as forcing-grounds for grammar schools. The aims, so clearly expressed in the Hadow Report on 'The Primary School', were very soon forgotten in the cut-throat competition for grammar school places, and the more enlightened development of primary school methods was somewhat

delayed.'

The primary school was not freed from the pressures and curricular constraints of the 11-plus selection examination until the introduction of comprehensive education in the mid-1960s and the abolition of the 11-plus examination. With new options open to the primary school, the 'child-centred' or 'progressive' approaches to primary education, which had been developing since prior to the 1931 Hadow Report, began to be implemented on a reasonably wide scale, culminating in the Plowden Report of 1967.

Children and their Primary Schools - A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education, England (which is generally known by the name of its chairperson, Lady Plowden) was published in 1967 and is probably one of the most thorough investigations into any area of education ever produced. It clearly and officially promoted child-centred approaches, the concept of 'informal' education and non-streaming.

The following quotation from the Plowden Report provides a picture of what the ideal primary school should be like in its everyday functioning, and, implicitly, something of the complex nature of the primary school and the primary school headship:

'A school is not merely a teaching shop, it must transmit values and attitudes. It is a community in which children learn to live first and foremost as children and not as future adults. In family life children learn to live with people of all ages. The school sets out deliberately to devise the right environment for children, to allow them to be themselves and to develop in the way and at the pace appropriate to them. It tries to equalise opportunities and to compensate for handicaps. It lays special stress on individual discovery, on first hand experience and on opportunities for creative work. It insists that knowledge does not fall into neatly separate compartments and that work and play are not opposite but complementary. A child brought up in such an atmosphere at all stages of his education has some hope of becoming a balanced and mature adult and of being able to live in, to contribute to, and to look critically at the

society of which he forms a part. Not all primary schools correspond to this picture, but it does represent a general and quickening trend.'

(paragraph 505, page 188)

It can be said that the Plowden Report was a landmark in the development of primary education (Richards 1984). It had a great influence on primary education at classroom level and its recognisable philosophy (i.e. Paragraphs 504 - 507) underpins practice today. For example, the high degree of teacher autonomy and variation in classroom practice and the concern with equality of opportunity for all children.. The Plowden Report, which had its critics (see R.S. Peters 1969), developed the concepts and ideas underpinning a more humanist kind of primary education first propagated in the 1931 (second) Hadow Report and a third Hadow Report of 1933 Report of the Consultative Committee on Infant and Nursery Schools.

The Plowden Report sees the job of the headteacher extending beyond administration and working closely with staff (and parents) to crystallise the school's aims and see them properly implemented through the right schemes, organisation and back-up resources. The Plowden Report lays emphasis on the primary school headteacher working as a teacher:

'The best way to get to know children is to teach them, and be with them inside and outside the classroom. In this way a good head teacher can stimulate the children, inspire the staff, weld the school into a unity and set its values. If there are areas of a curriculum which other teachers cannot effectively cover the headteacher will have to equip himself as far as possible to deal with them.'

(Paragraph 930, page 332.)

'There is no better way of commending their leadership to the staff than by demonstrating their skill in the classroom. The fact that the head continues to teach raises the whole status of teaching.'

(Paragraph 931, page 332.)

From about 1970 to the mid-1980s.

Galton et al (extract in Richard) describe the period from about 1970 to the mid-1980s as:

'... a period marked by economic difficulties, controversy over means and ends, new restraints on the teacher, and by the demise of 'primary schooling' in the sense previously established with the development of new organisational (or institutional) forms.'

This period began with the first of a series of criticisms, in the form of 'Black Papers', which attacked Plowden-type education for being 'permissive education'. Richards (1984, page 40) provides three extracts from 'The Black Papers' (edited by Cox and Dyson) which show the vehemence and insidiousness of the authors' criticisms.

In July 1976 the Report of the inquiry into the collapse of the William Tyndale Junior School in North London, the Auld Report, was published after that school, and the adjacent William Tyndale Infant School, had become the focus of a sustained and unprecedented amount of publicity. In his Introduction to the Report Mr. Robin Auld Q.C. (Chair) stated that between 1973 and 1975 William Tyndale Junior School had been beset with troubles and conflicts that caused great damage to it and to William Tyndale Infant School which was housed in the same building.

Gretton and Jackson (1976), page 5 saw William Tyndale Junior School as having 'disintegrated':

'In the autumn of 1973 William Tyndale was an ordinary enough junior school in a rundown area of North London; within just two years the school had fallen apart and striking teachers, angry parents and helpless politicians were confronting one another through the headlines of the national press and the current affairs programmes of television.'

The main ingredients of the William Tyndale Junior School's troubles were seen by Gretton and Jackson (page 121) as:

'a staff with strong radical convictions, a weak headteacher, a dithering inspectorate, worried parents and a local education authority that did not know what it wanted from its primary schools.'

The Auld Report laid the responsibility for the failure of the William Tyndale Junior School on the headteacher, though another teacher was named as 'the main architect' of the troubles. However, a number of other parties were criticised, some severely. The Auld Report criticised the school managers for not using procedures open to them. The local education authority was criticised for having failed the school badly; it had no policy as to standards and attainments to be aimed for, and no aims and objectives for the kind of education being provided in its schools. A number of officers within the local education authority and the Chair of the Schools Sub Committee were singled out for blame.

The case of the troubles of the William Tyndale Junior School serves to illustrate two factors relevant to primary school headship today, and Whitaker (1983) sees the Auld Report as perhaps the best case study of school management that exists because 'the fact that what it reveals actually happened adds to its importance as an essential document for headship training'.

Firstly, the case of the William Tyndale Junior School illustrates the centrality of primary school headship and how it functions within a complex network of social interaction, involving a wide range of tasks, responsibilities and interests. The Auld Report made very clear that the failure to establish an adequate framework of consultation between governors (then called managers), the headteacher and the staff of the school was a crucial factor in the troubles and conflicts that caused so much damage to the school.

Secondly, it shows how value judgements to do with defining criteria for judging whether a school is providing



a suitable education via relevant curricula and effective teaching methods underpin the individual headteacher's functioning, sometimes causing ambiguity and conflict for the headteacher and for other people. Such issues permeate primary education and primary school headship at the present time as much as they did at the time of the William Tyndale Junior School troubles. It is proposed that the implementation of the 1988 Education Reform Act will add to the complexity and ambiguous nature of primary school headship because of the essential place that value judgements play in the individual headteacher's everyday work.

Though many people came to see the crux of the William Tyndale Junior School troubles as a dispute between 'progressive' and 'traditional' methods of primary education, Gretton and Jackson saw teaching methods 'were merely a convenient vehicle through which different and deeper conflicts about school and society were thrashed out'. However, the debate about informal and child-centred approaches and 'traditional' methods was at the heart of a speech made by James Callaghan (then Prime Minister) at Ruskin College, Oxford, in October 1976 (and printed in the Times Educational Supplement on 22nd October 1976). This speech, coming in the wake of the public attention that the William Tyndale Junior School's collapse had received, had far reaching consequences for primary school education.

Hall, Mackay and Morgan (1986) cite James Callaghan's speech at Ruskin College as changing the boundaries of control of education in England and Wales. In his speech 'Towards A National Debate' (later termed the 'Great Debate') James Callaghan set in motion a range of concerns about what schools were doing and brought the school curriculum and pupil performance into public discussion involving the media and central government.

In the light of the William Tyndale Junior School inquiry and the ramifications of James Callaghan's speech,

there emerged the assertion of a link between the quality of headship and the 'success' of the school.

In the wake of the 'Great Debate' which resulted from James Callaghan's speech, there appeared a series of government discussion documents, Green and White Papers and Education Bills - none of which were specifically to do with primary schools but generally included them - which, to varying degrees, concerned themselves with headship.

In Ten Good Schools: A Secondary School Enquiry

(D.E.S./H.M.I. 1977, P35) the government stated that:

'... ... without exception, the most important single factor in the success of these schools is the quality of leadership of the head.'

The document cites four characteristics of the good (secondary) headteachers studied: they communicated specific educational aims to staff, pupils and parents; they displayed sympathetic understanding of staff and pupils and were available; they showed good humour, a sense of proportion and dedication to the tasks; and they were conscious of the corruption of power - power sharing was a keynote of the school.

Ten Good Schools marked the beginning of a major interest in headship generally by central government. The D.E.S. commissioned a project of the selection of secondary school headteachers at the Open University (Morgan, Hall and Mackay, 1983). In March 1983 the government published Circular No. 3/83 (The In-service Teacher Training Grants Scheme) which made available grants to support management training for experienced headteachers and senior teachers in primary and secondary schools. This training, which is currently being carried out at various centres throughout the country, is in the form of twenty-day and one-term courses for experienced headteachers and the contents of two such courses are discussed below.

This government decision to fund management courses for headteachers gave rise to the publication of the Education plc? Headteachers and the New Training Initiative (Maw et al, 1984) which criticises what the authors see as commercial and industrial models of managements being promoted as suitable for schools; see discussion and quotation in Chapter One.

Further example of central government's interest in headship, following the publication of Circular 3/83, was the funding in 1983 of the National Development Centre for School Management Training: the N.D.C. as is has come to be known as. The N.D.C. is based in Bristol and was initially funded in 1983 by the D.E.S. and the Welsh Office. From 1988 the centre aims to be self-financing and recover its costs through income from its training activities, professional services, publications, consultancies and research and development contacts.

From the mid 1980s.

This fifth period is marked by two significant events; the publication of the White Paper Better Schools (Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for Wales, 1985) which indicates the government's growing concern with leadership and the running of schools, and the appointment of Kenneth Baker as Secretary of State for Education and Science in 1986. The second half of the 1980s could well be termed 'the Baker Period' . It brought, through Kenneth Baker's zeal, a great deal of legislation - the Education(No. 2) Act 1986, The Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 and the Education Reform Act 1988. This plethora of legislation has swiftly and radically altered the basic power structure of the education system and it is proposed will have far-reaching effects on the everyday functioning of school, particularly the job of headteacher. The Education Reform Act 1988 requires all schools to reconsider the ways in which they

manage their curriculum, resources and personnel. The key changes to be brought about by the 1988 Act include: the devolution of financial management to most schools; the phased introduction of a national curriculum; the introduction of assessment and testing of pupils at 7, 11, 14 and 16 years of age; and the reorganisation of governing bodies, and the substantial extension of their powers. One consequence of the Act is that after 1989 local education authority inspectors and schools are expected to become increasingly involved in the introduction of teacher appraisal (Maclure 1988). Many of the ramifications of the 1988 Act (including resultant legislation) are not known at the time of writing; two texts which explain the actual Act in some detail and provide useful discussions are Maclure 1988 and Leonard 1988.

On the question of the effects of the Education Reform Act 1988 on the nature of headship, Leonard (1988) page 213, sounds a warning note for headteachers and would-be headteachers:

'It will be clear to the most casual reader of the Act or of the preceding chapters that the task of headteacher, already difficult, will become very much more so as a result of the various provisions of the new Act, the main concern was that the change to local management would increase substantially the financial responsibilities, making him more an administrator than a headteacher, and this is fair. But it is only one aspect of the whole, and at the extreme the job of headship in a large secondary school with community facilities may become too great for anyone to be asked to undertake. A summary here would be inadequate, and the advice to anyone in the role (or thinking of taking it on) must be to look very closely at the implications of the whole Act.'

Discussion of this fifth phase of the history of primary education has to be limited for the purpose of the present investigation. The only aspects of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 to be in effect at school level while data were being collected were the Governors' Annual Report (Section 30) and the Annual Meeting of Parents (Section 31). The Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 did not come into

effect until October 1987 after all data had been collected. The Education Reform Act 1988 did not come into force until after the collection of data had been completed and much of the report of the present investigation had been written. However, discussion of the official definition of the primary school headteacher's job is relevant to the present investigation, and the following section of the present chapter aims to pursue this. (The implications of the Education Reform Act 1988 with regard to the headteacher's job are discussed in Chapter Nine.)

#### The use of the term role.

The term 'role' has a particular meaning in the social psychology literature (for example Biddle 1979) and in the literature on organisations (for example Handy 1985 and Glover and Rushbrooke 1983). However, the term 'role' is variously defined and, according to Glover and Rushbrooke (page 58), is employed in an inconsistent way. Also, the authors warn that the value and validity of role theory in total is sometimes questioned:

'It is said that the role theory depicts individuals responding predictably to externally generated expectations, that it is a deterministic theory presenting people as being no more than puppets manipulated by events and circumstances and incapable of original or unpredictable action'

It is felt that only a systematic application of role theory - and its concepts such as role ambiguity, role incompatibility, role conflict and role overload - could determine whether or not the perspective would have any value to the present study of primary school headship. Such an application of role theory is beyond the scope of the present investigation.

The term 'role' as it appears in the Articles of Government mentioned below is used in a general sense, as it is in the literature on primary school headship discussed below. Throughout the investigation this general use of the

term is in line with a broad definition of 'role' based on Handy (1985): The definition of any individual's role in any situation will be a combination of the role expectations that the role set (i.e. the group with whom the person interacts) have of the focal role (i.e. the incumbent person).

The official definition of the primary school headteacher's job.

The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 gave school governors a much larger part to play in the day-to-day running of the school, including new responsibilities for the curriculum, staff, control over part of the school budget, and control of out of hours use of the school premises. The ramifications of this for the headteacher are that the job, as depicted in the current Articles of Government (resulting from the 1986 Act), involves much more consultation than previously, and paragraph 1 of the Articles states that 'Subject to any provision contained in these Articles the conduct of the school shall be under the direction of the governing body'. Under Section B of the Articles - the curriculum - the headteacher's job is referred to as a 'role' (whereas previous Articles of Government did not use the term) and sets out the duties of the headteacher as follows:-

'The headteacher shall determine and organise the secular curriculum for the school. In doing this so she/he shall -

- (a) consider the secular curriculum statement of the Authority;
- (b) consider the secular curriculum statement of the governing body and the sex education statement of the governing body;
- (c) have regard to any representations made to her/him from any persons connected with the community served by the school and from the chief officer of police.

The headteacher shall ensure that the secular curriculum is compatible with -

- (a) the Authority's policy as expressed in their secular curriculum statement as modified by the governing body's statement;
- (b) the governing body's policy of sex education unless this is incompatible with any part of a syllabus for a course leading to public examination, when the the headteacher shall to that extent override the governing body's statement; and
- (c) the enactments relating to education including in particular those relating to children with special educational needs.

The headteacher shall ensure that the secular curriculum is followed in the school.

The headteacher shall make available, at all reasonable times, any curriculum statement of the Authority and any curriculum statements of the governing body which have been furnished to her/him, to anyone wishing to inspect them.'

An overall picture of the headteacher's job (i.e. according to the school's Articles of Government) can only be obtained by close study of the document as a whole. The quotations given above serve to show the necessity of this and to demonstrate the complexity of the job (some of which could be termed 'red tape') as compared with the previous Articles of Government quoted above.

The official definition of the primary school headteacher's job is set out in The Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions of Employment) Order 1987 (Statutory Instruments No. 650, 1987) made by the Secretary of State under the powers of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987. The Order came into effect from October 1987.

The Order makes no distinction between primary and secondary school headship. The Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 caused a great deal of controversy and bad feeling

in schools when it was introduced, principally this was to do with the government having imposed a new system of deciding what teachers and headteachers should earn (by abolishing the existing pay negotiating machinery), and the vexatious issue of teachers and headteachers covering for absent colleagues. Also, the interpretation of Section 4 of Schedule 3 of the Order dealing with teachers' official working times caused controversy.

Schedule 1 of the Order sets out the conditions of employment for headteachers under four headings: Over-riding Requirements; General Functions; Professional duties; and Daily break.

Under the General Functions Section the Order clearly states that, subject to the School's Articles of Government, 'the head teacher shall be responsible for the internal organisation. management and control of the school'. Section 4 of Schedule 1 makes the headteacher responsible for 'formulating the overall aims and objectives of the school and the policies for their implementation.

Section 4 of Schedule 1, Professional duties, lists twenty-three duties which cover a wide range of tasks and responsibilities which the headteacher must carry out; the list could be said to constitute an enormous and complex workload for the primary school headteacher, with relatively little scope to delegate.

The Order does not suggest a model of headship beyond the conventional and broad definition of the manager's job, namely deciding what should be done and then getting other people to do it (Stewart 1985). The Order shows much of the primary school headteacher's job to be dependent on an interpretation of the document's suggested broad and complex workload. Such an interpretation is central to the present investigation's finding and features in the following Chapters.



Sutton (1987), page 61 sees the implications of the Teacher's Pay and Conditions Act as dramatic and challenging, and he urges headteachers to be responsible, positive and professional in coping with the consequences of the Act:

'We owe as much to our pupils. It is necessary to extract the positive aspects from the new arrangements and to use them for the benefit of our schools. Organised properly, we can, for example, now have or expect:

1. Properly constituted staff meetings to be fully attended.
2. Parents evenings to be attended by all teachers we require to be there.
3. Five days outside the pupil year when teachers will work under the direction of the Head.
4. A defined amount of time when teachers will be available to work.
5. An end to 'good will' disputes.
6. A definition of duties which provides criteria for assessing the good as well as the inadequate.
7. A strong definition of the status and powers of Heads and Deputies.
8. An allowance system which will bring about a revision of management structure over the next three years.'

As stated above, interpretation of the Section of the Order dealing with teachers' official working times continues to be a problem in some schools, and what Sutton is suggesting could be seen as more of a firm line than a positive one. However, Sutton's book, though published by the Secondary Heads Association, examines in detail the terms of the Act and offers valuable advice to those responsible for running schools.

Sutton's eight points are a useful reminder of the 'official' situation, but, like much of the headteacher's workload, the teacher's job depicted in the Teacher's Pay and Conditions Act's Order is open to a degree of

interpretation and negotiation if the headteacher is to maintain a good working relationship with her or his staff. For example, much that goes on the primary school is dependent on teachers' 'good will' (school journeys, time spent with parents beyond the requirements of the Act, the huge amount of after-school time and effort that some primary schools (known to the headteacher/researcher) are currently putting into coming to terms with the implementation of the National Curriculum). As was pointed out above, interpretation of the part of the Order dealing with teachers' official working times caused problems in some schools which have not yet been fully solved.

#### Primary school headship as depicted in the recent literature.

In the recent literature (i.e. of the 1980s) on headship the terms management and headship are at times used interchangeably.

Jones (1980) begins his discussion of the nature of management in primary schools by pointing out the differences between administration and management, two other terms that are often used interchangeably. Jones sums up the more passive nature of administration as that which makes possible what others have planned. Management he sees as the planning of policy, direction of resources and having authority. More specifically Jones describes the basic process of management as having the central elements of planning, organising, controlling and evaluation, with a cautionary note about accepting management as a pure science (page 20):

'There cannot be a set of true laws in management, therefore it cannot be a science. Management can be systematically practised but its application, particularly in the field of social provision such as education, must remain an art.'

Waters (1979), sees primary school headship in terms of tasks, functions and roles concerned with planning, organising, selecting and training staff, communicating, providing resources, co-ordination, team-building, motivating, delegating, controlling, directing, evaluating, innovating, chairing, representing, administrating, problem solving and decision-making.

In defining the role of the primary school headteacher, Whitaker (1983) uses a metaphor which is often used in describing primary school headship, namely juggling. Haigh, (1981) sees the job as something of a juggling act and a respondent in the present investigation used the term juggling to describe the essence of the job. Whitaker (page 8) states:

'In coming to terms with the role a new head is faced with something of a balancing act. To the collection of tasks that must be done, and those that are expected to be done, must be added those which the particular school situation demands; only then can the head see what space is left for those he or she would like to do. It should be clear by now that a variety of factors influence the way a headteacher goes about the tasks. In the end it is the head who will formulate a role which is both acceptable and manageable.'

The consequences of this 'juggling' or balancing' aspect of the job help to generate what is perceived of in the present investigation as the personal and situational nature of primary school headship (e.g. personal value judgements involved in prioritising, responding, decision-making and constructing a view of the role of headteacher in relation to the overall functioning and needs of the particular school).

Whitaker's role definition (which he sees as not being definitive) involves a range of tasks and responsibilities that have a four-fold framework - authority and responsibility; curriculum; organisation; and people. However, Whitaker points out that the job is much more than

carrying out tasks and responsibilities and that success depends on making compatible the two elements - people and purpose - through skilled interpersonal relationships. Whitaker stresses the personal nature of the job and his conception could be said to be close to the theoretical proposition put forward in Chapter One that primary school headship is to do with creating and operationalising through a process of personal influence a vision of the school and its everyday functioning.

The above theoretical proposition owes much to Coulson (1986) - see below - and forms the second of the four propositions that form the investigation's theoretical framework as set out at the beginning of Chapter Three.

Day, Johnston and Whitaker (1985) put forward a 'professional development approach' to 'managing primary schools'. They define their notion of leadership as 'consultancy' which is based on the principle that 'adults, like children, cannot be developed; they can only be given opportunities to develop.'

Day et al (page 6) give support to the first of the investigation's theoretical propositions (set out at the beginning of Chapter Three), namely that primary school headship is at the centre of a complex network of responsibilities and communications:

'It must be stated at the outset that the leader's job is first and foremost to influence others in order to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness of the teaching-learning process. In the case of primary school headteachers, the people they must influence are the staff, the children, the parents, the school managers (governors) and the L.E.A. Although each of these groups will influence the headteacher, only he or she is in a position to have an overview which takes into account each of the needs expressed, but which is more than their sum. This is expected of a leader and is variously called a policy, an ideal, a set of aspirations or a vision for the school which the head holds and is expected to communicate to all the interest groups which make up a school community.'

This quotation from Day et al illustrates the personal and situational nature of the job discussed above, and it also promotes the notion of the centrality of headship in the overall functioning of the school as was put forward in the D.E.S. H.M.I. publication Ten Good Schools, discussed earlier.

Primary School Management in Action is the title given to a volume of twenty-one articles edited by Craig (1987), and Clerkin's article on the changing nature of headship which was quoted in Chapter One is from this book. The twenty-one articles cover a wide range of topics and perspectives which are assembled under three main headings: Professionalism; Policy Making; Relationships outside the school.

Dean (1987) gives a useful list of tasks and skills which constitute primary school headship and this list is reproduced in Chapter One to illustrate the multi-dimensional nature and enormity of the job. However, Dean states that the job consists of much more than a list of tasks and skills - see quotation in Chapter One - and she stresses the importance of consultation with everyone concerned in formulating the aims and policies which guide the long-term and the day-to-day functioning of the school.

Whole staff consultation is central to Bell's (1988) view that primary schools can be managed much more effectively if all staff are involved in the processes of management. Bell holds that the role of the primary school headteacher is a relatively ambiguous one and is 'a dynamic fusion of professionalism, leadership and management'.

Alan Coulson's text (1986) is of particular value to the present investigation.

Coulson's work is based on his observation of three headteachers for whom he worked while, for ten years, Deputy Head of a large primary school. The starting point

for the study was provided by data that he had collected previously from periods of observation and interviews which were carried out as part of research that he had undertaken while a Deputy Head. Coulson describes his study (page 5) as;

'... an interpretative, perhaps impressionistic, account is built firstly upon close knowledge and observation of how a number of heads conduct their work, and secondly on what they and their closest colleagues say about what they believe they are doing.'

The rigour of Coulson's methodology is not an issue with regard to the present investigation. Rather, his discussion as an informed "insider" and his idea of developing Mintzberg's notion of the divisions of managerial work provided insights which influenced the construction of the present investigation's theoretical framework. Also the insights which Coulson provided helped to formulate the model of primary school headship proposed in Chapter Nine.

In his study of primary school headteachers Coulson used Mintzberg's (1973) framework which divides managerial work into three principal role areas or groups of functions - Interpersonal, Informational and Divisional Roles. (Webb and Llyons, in Gray 1982, previously did work based on Mintzberg's framework with reference to senior personnel in secondary schools. The diary used by Webb and Llyons in their work is discussed in Chapter Five.)

In his study Coulson found it necessary to create an additional new (fourth) category to accommodate the teaching and professional value elements of primary school headship. Coulson termed this additional category Leading Professional Roles: Goal setter and Evaluator; Curriculum Co-ordinator and Developer; Teacher; and Exemplar of Professional Values. It is suggested that it is this fourth category of Coulson's which helps to make primary school headship something more than management (in the conventional sense).

Coulson's fourth category is of a highly personal nature and it permeates the other three categories in the day-to-day and long-term functioning of the primary school. Coulson sees 'personal influence' as an important aspect of the primary school headteacher's management behaviour, and this notion is explored in the following chapters, especially Chapter Nine which provides a model of primary school headship that expands the notion.

Though the present investigation does not set out to include looking at personality variables amongst headteachers, the theoretical concept of the personal and situational nature of the job is central to the study and what Coulson found to be the characteristics of successful headteachers is pertinent to the present discussion. Coulson states that his resume of the characteristics is intended to be descriptive rather than prescriptive, and what follows is a brief summary of his overall resume.

Successful heads: Are goal-orientated in so far as they have a vision of how they would like to see their schools develop.

Enjoy a relatively high degree of personal security in that their sense of themselves as people enables them to tackle issues inside and outside the school without feeling unduly threatened.

Have a high tolerance of ambiguity.

Tend to be proactive in confronting the internal and external demands of the school.

Are sensitive to the dynamics of power inside and outside their school.

Can take an analytical perspective towards problem-solving.

Behave in ways which enable them to be in charge of the job and not let the job be in charge of them.

The writers mentioned so far in this brief account of some of the recent texts on primary school headship have,

with the exception of Coulson, been essentially, but to varying degrees, concerned with the processes of getting things done; identifying needs and tasks and the headteacher skills needed to carry them out in co-operation with, and through, other people.

By contrast, Gray (1985a and 1985b) puts forward a view of school management that is primarily concerned with the people in the organisation. Gray states that 'there is no essential characteristic of the school that cannot be expressed in terms of people individually as well as collectively' (1985a) page 8. Thus Gray promotes a subjective perspective to understanding schools which 'is less concerned with explaining organisations than explaining how individuals create organisation' (1985b), page 78. Gray's perspective is in line with the phenomenological approach which underpins the present investigation,

Gray (1985a) cites the essential quality of being a headteacher of a school as that of a facilitator and that one should be concerned only with the facilitation of the teaching and learning processes. (The headteachers taking part in the present investigation would probably respond to this view with a cry of 'if only!'). Gray is inclined to believe that the key management issue is to do with freedom and authority and sees the greatest resource for a headteacher as the collegueship of his or her staff. However, relationships within the school, in Gray's perspective, are expected to achieve a very high degree of mutual trust and honesty where the school develops and functions in terms of the individual's personal growth and commitment.

Underpinning Gray's perspective is the notion of Organisation Development (sometimes known as O.D.) which he defines (page 29, 1985a) as:



'We are coming to talk about Organisation Development rather than Staff Development in recognition of the reality that it is the organisation which develops as a result of the changes in an individual member. ... Organisation Development is concerned with the psychological state of the school and is deliberate and conscious attempt to help the organisation to change for what the majority of members will term "the better".'

This brief reference to Gray's work cannot explain his perspective fully, and in trying to summarise his views there is a danger of doing them an injustice through simplification. However, running through the majority of Gray's writings is an idea very pertinent to the present investigation: the notion of the primary school headteacher's job (in everyday Practice) being a highly personal one - 'the springs of good management are in the personal disposition of the manager' (1985a, page 78).

In recent years an important part of the headteacher's job has come to be seen as the responsibility for providing (ideally in consultation with others) statements and policies which set out the aims and objectives of the school (see for example Dean 1987 and Bell 1988) for accountability purposes and as strategic guidelines and targets for teachers and other personnel such as parents and governors. One of the Professional duties of the headteacher set out in The Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions of Employment) Order 1987 is the formulation of the overall aims and objectives of the school and the policies for their implementation.

Hoyle (1986) states that the concept of organisational goals is invariably problematic but particularly so in the case of schools. In an interesting discussion, Hoyle gives his reasons why proclaimed school goals tend to be diffuse, diverse, abstract and non-operational as they generally stand. The following quotation (page 51) presents the central idea underpinning

Hoyle's view - i.e. the limitations of viewing schools (and headship) from a prescriptive or ideal and rationalistic perspective, as was pointed out in Chapter One of the present investigation and as stated in the investigation's four-fold theoretical framework at the beginning of Chapter Three.

'... ... we tend to view organisations from a rationalistic perspective, the perspective which dominates management theory perhaps even more strongly than it dominates organisation theory. This rationalistic ideal of organisational process assumes the establishment of a clear set of achievable goals, the total commitment of organisational members to these goals, the availability of all the necessary resources, the capacity of organisational members to co-ordinate their activities, and the unequivocal achievement of successful outcomes. In this direction lies neuroticism, if one takes neurotics to be people who are preoccupied with the discrepancy between an ideal world which they carry around in their heads and the imperfect world of everyday experience.'

Hoyle's notion of the 'pathos' inherent in all organisations, but particularly in schools, which arises from the chronic discrepancy between proclaimed organisational goals and their achievement is pertinent to the present investigation in the way that such a discrepancy emerges in the reflective interviews with four primary school headteachers which are the subject of Chapter Four.

Bush (1986) provides an interesting discussion of five models of 'educational management' - Formal, Democratic, Political, Subjective and Ambiguity. Gray (1986) criticises Bush's text for not doing justice to the theories it deals with, and for the selection of the theories being partial and the classification of them being a personal one. Gray's criticism accepted, Bush provides some useful insights into possible ways of viewing schools as organisations and his discussion of the Ambiguity model is pertinent to the discussion of the implications of the finding of the present investigation in Chapter Nine.

Two recent references to primary school headship from documents issued by the local education authority in which the present investigation was carried out.

In a report on primary education within the local education authority in which the present investigation was carried out (Improving Primary Schools, Report of the Committee on Primary Education, 1985) - generally known after its chairman as the Thomas Report - the Authority's Instrument and Articles of Government for its schools are cited as the accepted definition of the headteacher's job. However, the Report states (para. 3.24) that although the definition of a head's role has remained much the same for many years, the context in which the work is done has changed considerably and the job is undoubtedly more complex and stressful than it was. The Report emphasised the centrality and personal nature of primary school headship and points out (para. 3.25) that successful heads have always used a combination of being authoritarian, consultative and participative as a particular situation warranted:

'Their success has often come from choosing well, from knowing when to take the lead and when to confirm the leadership offered by their colleagues. They do not excuse poor practice in their schools on the ground that someone else suggested it, or that they delegated the decision to others.'

In the report of a longitudinal study which followed nearly 2,000 school pupils through their junior schooling in 50 randomly selected primary schools - The Junior School Project: A Summary of the Main Report (1986) - the I.L.E.A. claimed that (page 34):

'Purposeful leadership' occurred where the headteacher understood the needs of the school and was actively involved in the school's work, without exerting total control over the rest of the staff.

In effective schools, headteachers were involved in curriculum discussions and influenced the

content of guidelines drawn up within the school, without taking total control. They also influenced the teaching style of teachers, but only selectively, where they judged it necessary. This leadership was demonstrated by an emphasis on monitoring pupils' progress through the keeping of individual records. Approaches varied - some schools kept written records; others passed on folders of pupils' work to their next teacher; some did both - but a systematic policy of record keeping was important.'

The Junior School Project findings indicated that the deputy head can have a major role in the effectiveness of junior schools (page 35):

'Where the deputy was frequently absent, or absent for a prolonged period (due to illness, attendance on long courses, or other commitment), this was detrimental to pupils' progress and development. Moreover, a change of deputy head tended to have negative effects.

The responsibilities undertaken by deputy heads also seemed to be important. Where the head generally involved the deputy in policy decisions, it was beneficial to the pupils. This was particularly true in terms of allocating teachers to classes. Thus, it appeared that a certain amount of delegation by the headteacher, and sharing of responsibilities, promoted effectiveness.'

The local education authority's provision for in-service training for primary school headteachers.

In 1986 the I.L.E.A. published its report into the in-service training needs of experienced headteachers - The Needs of Experienced Heads (Primary Management Studies) - which was based on the questionnaire returns of 53 'primary' school headteachers who had more than five years headship experience. The types of headship involved in the study were: 5% Nursery headteachers; 11% Infant headteachers; 19% Junior headteachers and 65% (J.M. & I.) headteachers.

The conclusions to the report state that more than half of the respondents suggested that there was much stress in their job caused by the Authority's initiatives and not

enough time developing their own. Not only were these issues seen to be causes of stress, but many headteachers felt that they no longer had sufficient control over their school's priorities.

It is interesting to note that only half the headteachers rated their current job satisfaction as 'high' and about a third expected it to fall in the future. The majority of the headteachers were concerned about spending too many years in one school, and career prospects were seen as limited by the lack of opportunity and a lack of counselling.

Overwhelmingly, the greatest in-service training need was given as the need for regular courses of a demanding nature and with high quality in-put, the suggested content of any such courses is not given in the report. The questionnaire returns showed that there was a marked need for headteachers to have regular opportunities for association with their peers.

The programmes of in-service courses available through the Authority's Headteacher Training Initiative for 1987-88 and 1988-89 list a range of types of in-service training for acting headteachers, new headteachers and experienced headteachers. The courses range from short residential courses to part-time release over a period of one-term, two-terms and one-year.

The topics covered by these courses were: 'Teaching and Learning' (for headteachers with over ten years headship experience); 'Curriculum Management' (for headteachers with five or more years of headship experience); 'Trainers Course' (designed to enable experienced headteachers to provide support for new and acting headteachers); and 'Broader Perspectives' (designed to help headteachers with two to four years headship experience to develop their 'educational philosophy and to deepen their understanding and awareness of the many professional issues which confront

them in their work'). There were courses provided specifically for new and acting headteachers.

The needs of acting and new headteachers were differentiated and separate short residential courses were provided. The purpose of the overnight residential course for acting headteachers were listed as:

- to meet key people in the Authority;
- to encourage and recognise the unique and challenging position of Acting Headship;
- to provide peer group contact;
- to consider individual realistic targets for the school;
- to explore the nature and implications of changing relationships with a temporary situation.

The purpose of the course for new headteachers (two nights residential) were listed as:

- to provide an overview of the Authorities structure;
- to meet key people in the Authority;
- to acquaint course members with possible areas of support;
- to enable course members to raise issues of general concern;
- to provide strategies for defining and addressing priorities in school;
- to consider issues of achievement and quality in children's learning.

The trainers' Course is a one-term course and originated as a result of the government's Circular No. 3/83 (The In-service Teachers Training Grants Scheme - March 1983), which was discussed above. This course is run by the Centre for School Management Training and Development at Roehampton Institute of Higher Education and the Authority sends headteachers with the purpose of training them to support the development of a coherent programme of induction, training and support for new and acting headteachers within the Authority.

Conversations with a colleague who attended the Trainers' Course during 1988, and an examination of the documents and notes that were generated by, or supplied as in-input for, the course reveal that it is a broad and

eclectic course which does not promote any single model of primary school headship but rather is generally concerned with conventional management training techniques to do with management and leadership skills; teamwork; and consultancy.

A document which had been used as input for the Trainers' Course is of interest to the present discussion. This is a list of recommendations for support and training for new headteachers that had been drawn up by members of a course for new headteachers run by the Authority during 1987. The recommendations are numerous and cover a wide range of topics. The document is reproduced below and the venue and course members are anonymous.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORT & TRAINING FOR NEW HEADS  
(as proposed by heads attending New Heads Course 19-21 October 1987)

INSPECTORATE:

- a policy across Inspectorate: make early informal/individual contact.
- to visit new heads early in term to say hello, offer history of school reporting on previous substantial visit. Objective guide, listener and someone to bounce ideas off.
- list of New Heads sent round Division so New Heads can contact each and set up self-help groups of people appointed at same time.
- to link new heads with nearby experienced head.
- timing of first substantial visit crucial.
- allow more use of time before taking up post in new school.
- Inspector to check that school has full complement of staff.

DIVISIONAL OFFICE

- accurate information from D. O.
- an early visit to D. O. for guided tour to meet personnel (within first term). This seems to happen in some divisions but not in others.
- DEO to visit new heads in school.
- up-to-date list of names and tel. ext. for D. O. personnel.
- guidance on AUR, the role of Teaching Staff Section, Management Section and how they can support you.
- practical training (? day INSET) on Finance: COAS, AUR, disbursement, peak hours, employment

- conditions for support staff.
- any way for new head to appeal to change AUR to new effect.
  - is there someone at D.O. responsible for V.A. schools?
  - is a named person to phone up on admin issues/problems (esp. outstanding ILEA appointments)

#### MANAGEMENT CLERKS:

- liaison with management clerk as a priority - clerk to visit the school once a month in first term.
- to monitor leaving/handing over/entering stage.
- to check that new head has all relevant documents in office.
- what to do when management clerk is unable to be helpful (or useless)?
- what is the position of VA schools with no management clerk from D.O.?

#### GOVERNORS: NIL

#### COUNTY HALL:

- an auditor to go through accounts with every new head early in term.
- formal input on legal position of Head.
- a revised New Heads pack from County Hall.

#### SUPPORT AGENCIES:

- early visit from Equipment Officer and list of what they can do to help.
- visits and extra time for new Heads from: Ed. Psych., Senior EWO., Architect, Schoolkeeper Supervisor - especially if school has been amalgamated, School Health personnel.

#### TEACHERS' CENTRES:

- key person to visit new head.
- explanation of INSET bids.
- info on what is on offer at Teachers' centre.
- one division has a booklet with photos of key people in division (DEO, Inspector, etc.) which is sent to new heads.
- mutual induction across divisions with follow-up - same groups can meet again with a structure and a focus.
- Heads going to Teachers' Centre meetings/courses with staff.
- Teachers' Centres should re-think some of their



courses.

- professional in-service work e.g. Chesley's 2-day conference for Heads on Lang. and Literacy.
- Deputy Heads should be well-trained for headship in a structured way.
- open days for new heads in ILEA centres (specialist and multi-purpose).

#### MATERIALS/DOCUMENTS/PACKS:

- Key information: Primary Handbook, Governors Handbook, listed documents like PMS list, where to get past copies of circulars.
- a directory of ILEA-speak and glossary of ILEA terminology.
- survival pack.
- up-to-date list of names and tel.no. of personnel at D.O. support agencies, etc.
- job descriptions of support staff (school-keeper, secretary, etc.).
- checklist of books/documents/guidelines from County Hall which should be in school and whom to contact if not available.
- book list of recommended books to read.
- a pack for new Heads which contains much more structure for the initial period of headship.
- admin. info.

#### RECOMENDATIONS FOR SUPORT/TRAINING/INDUCTION:

- set up local New Acting Heads groups - perhaps intitiated by Inspector but then become autonomous. Continuity of group is Inspector's responsibility. New heads inducted into the group properly. Training for experienced heads who might help such groups. Inclusion of senior heads - all phases.
- New Heads groups should include Acting Heads.
- formalised policy on how long is a new head new - possibly up to two years experience.
- formal induction programme (in school time on fixed days) one a month, with Inspectors actively encouraging New Heads to attend.
- cluster meeting in each other's schools organised by Inspector.
- visits to each other's schools.
- need for more structure and positive input (seem to be moaning sessions).
- more curricular input, while head is new and staff are expecting change.
- important not to lose sight of the purpose of our job i.e. to raise achievement.
- support from other heads, a mentor who is appointed to that role and knows about management and day-to-day issues.
- HTI New Heads course possibly too early.

- HTI New Heads course could have included 1/2 hour for heads to meet divisionally and get to know one another.
- HTI course - review, next term/next year, in same groups of progress/developments since this course.
- local support networks.
- help from people in school.

SELF-HELP:

- action plan for own survival: learning to relax, taking a lunch-break.
- sharing ideas, in really structured groups, re. training, time-management, use of new technology.
- BE CONFIDENT!!!!

The Authority also seconds experienced headteachers to another in-service training course that originated as a result of the government's Circular No. 3/83: a twenty-day management course run by the Education Management Unit of the Institute of Education, University of London. This course, as currently advertised to headteachers, has the following principal objectives:

- To examine and practice ways of improving personal management performance including time management, conflict and stress.
- To develop strategies for managing change.
- To use alternative strategies of team building and corporate planning.
- To develop a number of approaches to identifying and taking action on aspects of school which require improvement.
- To consider the issues of staff development and appraisal.
- To develop successful INSET activities.
- To examine the requirements of the 1988 Education Reform Act including: National Curriculum; Assessment and Testing; Role of Governors and Parents; and Local Management in Schools.

One of the co-directors of this twenty-day course stated (in a letter) that the course content was clearly influenced by training methods used by industry and that K.B. Everard (see Chapter One) had been a trainer with this industrial background who had contributed to the course. The co-director cited K.B. Everard's two books as

'excellent' (Everard 1986 and Everard and Morris 1985), which gives some implicit indication of the actual climate and content of the course.

### Summary and conclusions.

Generally, primary school headship is included in a general concept of headship in the official documents and legislation.

The clearest conclusions that emerge from this review of the official documents and legislation is the ever changing nature of the job, its complex and ambiguous nature (i.e. at the level of interpreting the job in everyday practice), and the wide range and sheer volume of work involved if all the practical implications and demands of legislation and official guidelines were carried out to the full. The implementation of the Education Reform Act 1988 is seen as bringing many more changes to the headteacher's job - changes that will undoubtedly make it more complex and more difficult to carry out without an increase in personnel and other resources within the schools. It is felt by many that such increases will not be forthcoming in primary schools because of their size and sheer number.

The examples of the William Tyndale Junior School's collapse in 1975 and the concerns of the 'Great Debate' which James Callaghan's 1976 speech set in motion serve to show one source of the complexity and ambiguity surrounding the primary school headteachers' job: the essential place that value judgements play in the thinking underpinning the running of a primary school (e.g. choice of curricular content, teaching methods and pupil performance), and the consequences of the sometimes differing perspectives and ideologies of educational practitioners, parents, governors, politicians and others.

In the official literature a good headteacher (using

the term in a general sense) is someone with clear aims who is sympathetic to the contributions of others yet is able to act alone if necessary; being able to communicate ideas and explain the running of the school to a wide and complex network of interested parties is seen as important. The view was confirmed in the Authority's own Thomas Report of 1985.

The official documents acknowledge the centrality of headship in the overall success, or failure, of the school, and government aided in-service training for headteachers was provided with the issue of Circular 3/83 in March 1983.

The official definition of the primary school headteacher's job - or more accurately, the headteacher's job generally - is set out in The Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions of Employment) Order 1987 made by the Secretary of State under the powers of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987. The Order clearly demonstrates the broad scope and complexity of the job.

The provision for in-service training for headteachers within the Authority recognises the importance of supporting all headteachers - acting, new and experienced. This in-service training has been a valuable support to numerous headteachers working within the Authority, and many regret that recent government cut-backs in financial support and the abolition of the Authority will result in it being greatly diminished. The content of the in-service training provided by higher education institutions, as a result of Circular 3/83, tends to have been influenced by methods used in industry and is generally concerned with conventional management training techniques to do with management and leadership skills, teamwork, and consultancy.

The recent literature on primary school headship does not promote a specific style of headship, and skills in inter-personal relationships and teamwork are generally

cited as central to the job.

This review of the recent literature confirms the picture of primary school headship that emerged from the official documents; namely the changing nature of the job, the ambiguities and complexities which surround it, the wide range of tasks and expectations and the size of the workload.

In the literature primary schools and headship are generally viewed from a specific theoretical standpoint, namely managerial. Headship is depicted as being principally concerned with the headteacher as the leader of the processes of getting things done and the headteacher skills required to do this in consultation with, and through, other interested parties such as teachers, parents, children, governors and local education authority personnel. Examples of some of these processes are: the formulation, communication and implementation of aims, objectives and policies; creation and maintenance of the ethos of the school and its values; organising curricular and teaching methods and their evaluation; team building and working with people; decision-making; managing change; administration; oversight for the maintenance of the building and equipment; maintenance of all resources; and a wide range of matters to do with health, safety and welfare of all children and adults. The headteacher being seen in action as a good teacher is held to be an important aspect of the job. Dean's list of primary school headteacher tasks and skills reproduced in Chapter One stands as a good example of the job as generally depicted in the literature. Most writers, like Dean, stress that primary school headship is much more than such a list of tasks and skills might suggest.

Hoyle (1986) was cited as supporting the view (underpinning this investigation's theoretical approach) that viewing primary school headship and primary schools from a philosophical or ideal and rationalistic perspective

is of limited value in attempts aimed at achieving an understanding of the headteacher's job as it actually occurs in everyday practice. Hoyle's text was also cited as a good discussion of the possible problematic nature of proclaimed school goals.

The writing of both Coulson and Gray were discussed as having influenced the construction of the investigation's four-fold theoretical framework (set out at the beginning of Chapter Three) because of their subjective perspectives. One of the objectives of the investigation is to explore the essential subjective character of primary school headship in practice and an expansion of Coulson's notion of 'personal influence processes' as occupying a dominant place within the primary school headteacher's 'management' behaviour will be attempted in order to help achieve this.

## C H A P T E R   T H R E E

### Methodological approach and research design.

#### The investigation's theoretical framework.

A number of assumptions and theoretical propositions were made in Chapters One and Two, and these contributed, directly and indirectly, to the construction of the investigation's four-fold theoretical framework which is set out below in the form of four inter-related propositions.

1. Primary school headship is seen to be multi-dimensional, complex and in a constant state of change. Often it is without easily quantifiable content and outcomes, or clearly definable boundaries. From the headteacher's perspective, primary school headship can be conceived of as being at the centre of a complex network of responsibilities, expectations, needs, choices, constraints, un-anticipated issues etc., involving children, parents, teachers, support staff, governors, local education authority personnel and others. Much of the headteacher's work is of a reactive nature, many tasks occur simultaneously and the headteacher has to prioritise in order to cope with a sometimes enormous workload.
2. Primary school headship is conceived of as a social process, a process of personal influence; it is complex and in dynamic relation to its context within (the school as) an open social system.
3. Within this theoretical framework the individual headteacher is viewed as constructing her or his sense of the job via a reflective and socially derived interpretation of the interaction of the two main dimensions of primary school order - the social/structural dimension (with the central concept of role) and the personal dimension which has at its centre the need-disposition of the individual (Ge tzels, Lipham and Campbell, 1968).
4. Conventional models of management are of limited use in understanding primary school headship at a practical level because of their prescriptive and general nature and because of the ways in which primary schools are different from other organisations. Rather, inductive research concerned with the individual headteacher's subjective interpretation of her or his everyday experiences is

seen as the vehicle for achieving a fuller understanding of the job as it occurs in everyday practice.

This four-fold theoretical framework was formulated from:-

- a. a search of the literature, particularly J.W. Getzels et al (1968), H.L. Gray (1985a and 1985b) and A. Coulson (1986);
- b. the headteacher/researcher's experience of twelve years as a primary school headteacher (in two schools); and
- c. reflections upon the series of informal exploratory conversations and correspondence between the researcher and four fellow headteachers (1985-86) as discussed in Chapter One.

#### The choice of research methodology.

The overall resources available for carrying out the investigation (i.e. part-time study) had some influence on the choice of research methodology. However, the particular purpose of the investigation - to achieve a description of primary school headship as it occurs in everyday practice from the headteacher's perspective - shaped the final choice of methodology, as explained below.

A proposition embedded in the investigation's theoretical framework is that the primary school headteacher's job is multi-dimensional, complex, changing and often without easily quantifiable content and outcomes or clearly definable boundaries.

A predominately objectivist/positive research strategy would, essentially, be of limited value for the present investigation because of its concern with the 'general', its abstract nature, and the ways in which such research by its very nature simplifies and at times distorts complex phenomena by not being able to catch subtle and previously unknown variables.



It is believed - and reiterated throughout the investigation - that to understand such a complex phenomenon as primary school headship 'objectively' one needs to understand the subjective experiences of the individual headteacher. Thus the individual headteacher's perceptions of and responses to the multiplicity of activities and concerns that make up her or his daily workload are the crux of the investigation, and research strategies were sought that would yield a detailed exploration of these.

Therefore, a methodology was needed that would yield headteachers' perceptions of what they actually do in the course of the day and give a close-up and detailed picture of primary school headship in action as seen through the eyes of the individual headteacher. Thus the investigation will of necessity be data intensive, rather than data extensive, in order to achieve the required depth of investigation.

Mintzberg (1973) pages 222-229 cites seven research methodologies that have been used to study managerial work, and he lists the advantages and disadvantages of each of the methods in a summarised table which is reproduced below.

Table 3/1

Seven methods to Study Managerial Work

Method	Applications	Major Advangtage(s)	Major Disadvantage(s)	Appropriate Use
Secondary Sources	Neustadt	Convenient; draws on analyses of others	Data frequently unavailable, inappropriate, or incomplete	The study of job of inaccessible manager
Questionnaire and Interview	Ohio State Leadership group	Convenient	Data of questionable reliability	To study manager's perception of his job
Critical Incident and Sequence of Episodes	Flanagan, Marples	Allows for intense probing	Parts of job not covered by the data	To study certain aspects of job in depth (e.g. decision making)
Diary	Carlson, Stewart	Efficient (i.e. large sample possible relative to researchers time investment)	No help in developing understanding of new dimentions; some problems with interpretation, consistency, and reliability	To study characteristics of large sample of differing managerial jobs
Activity Sampling	Kelly, Wirdenius	Efficient; recording by reseacher	Little help in developing understanding of new dimensions; noncontinious, hence interpretation difficult	To study observational aspects of different jobs in one location
Unstructured Observation	Sayles, Dalton, Hodgson et al	Enables researcher to understand new dimensions and to probe	Nonsystematic (may lose important data; cannot replicate); inefficient	To study the most complex, least understood aspects of manager's job (content)
Structured Observation	Guest, Ponder, Mintzberg, Radomsky	Enables researcher to understand new dimensions, to probe, to be systematic	Ineffecient (consumes much researcher time); difficult to interpret some activities	To study at same time content and characteristics of small sample of managers' jobs

From: The Nature of Managerial Work

by Henry Mintzberg (1973) Page 229

All seven methodologies were considered in relation to the present investigation, together with the notion of respondents recording their activities and responses as they went about their daily work using an audio tape recorder. The latter idea was abandoned because of the enormity of the task of transcribing the audio tapes.

Observation and activity sampling (by the researcher) were thought to be in some ways suitable techniques. However, it was felt (after discussion with the Pilot Headteachers, 1985-86) that :

- a. the presence of someone trailing the headteacher, however unobtrusive, would have an undetermined effect of his or her behaviour in such a people-oriented, complex and sometimes sensitive job, and
- b. the techniques would yield the researcher's perceptions of what was going on - not the perceptions and responses of the individual headteacher.

It was felt that to capture a close-up and detailed picture of primary school headship through the eyes of the individual headteacher, a research instrument was needed that was:-

- a. unobtrusive, attractive and not threatening to the respondent;
- b. sensitive and flexible to the respondent's use;
- c. capable of receiving the individual respondent's personal - and possibly intimate - perceptions and comments without researcher influence;
- d. relatively unstructured and thus able to catch subtle and unknown variables as perceived by the individual respondent; and
- e. capable of yielding a continuous account of the

headteacher's day, including what might be termed 'private' aspects or areas that might be inaccessible to a researcher.

Such an instrument would, of necessity, have to be in some ways in the hands of the individual headteacher. The disadvantage of this is obvious - reliance on the respondent to use the instrument well and truthfully: this makes triangulation an important issue.

After considering:-

1. the principal aim and objectives of the investigation (set out in Chapter One)
2. a review of possible methodologies - based on Mintzberg's work;
3. the overall resources available for carrying out the investigation; and
4. the particular nature of the phenomenon to be investigated (i.e. headteachers' perceptions of the content of their daily workload) and the kind of research instrument that would be suitable for such complex and sensitive phenomena -

an interpretative micro-sociological research methodology was adopted, namely case study method.

The investigation's methodology consists of case studies of four primary school headteachers.

The study's principal research instrument is a specially designed diary completed by each of the four headteachers for five working days spread over a period of five or six months. Additional data were collected by questionnaire and semi-structured interview.

The purpose and findings of the questionnaire and interviews are discussed in Chapter Four. Chapter Five is concerned with the rationale, purpose and procedure of the diary as the investigation's principal research instrument. Chapter Six provides an account of the analysis of diary data in relation to the headteacher's perceptions of the content of their workload. The use of the diary as the investigation's principal research instrument is evaluated in Chapter Seven, and Chapters Seven and Eight constitute an examination of the implications of the use of data collected by diary, questionnaire and interview in that they are in the medium of language which mediates data in specific ways and raises the question of subjectivity.

Case study method: four primary school headteachers.

The title of the investigation - An exploratory study of four primary school headteachers' perceptions of the content of their daily workload - served as a focusing agent in that an empirical study of primary school headship in everyday practice was initially viewed as a potentially amorphous and difficult area for investigation. (See the investigation's four-fold theoretical framework, above.)

The investigation is limited to four case studies of primary school headteachers in order to achieve the depth of investigation and the 'reality' needed to serve the purpose of the research and which are the strengths of case study. Also, the other advantages of case study method (Adelman et al, in Bell, 1984) make it a suitable method for the present investigation, principally its capacity to:-

1. take into account uncontrolled variables, subtleties and complexities that are unknown or unanticipated at the outset
2. allow collection of data by a variety of techniques and in accessible forms.

The weaknesses of case study are pointed out by Nisbet & Watt (in<sup>1984</sup> Bell, page 76), and these were kept in mind during the construction of the research design, the research instrument, the collection of data and the analysis of data:

'The results (of case study) are not easily generalizable, except by an intuitive judgement that 'this case' is similar to 'that case'. Again, the observer in a case study has to be selective but his selectivity is not normally open to the checks which can be applied in rigorously systematic inquiries such as large-scale surveys - it tends to be personal and subjective.'

Outcome of the procedure for application to do research in I.L.E.A. schools.

An application was submitted to the I.L.E.A. in July 1985 requesting permission to collect the views of headteachers, teachers, parents, governors and children as to how they perceived the primary school headteacher's everyday job. The application form stated that the research would involve working with approximately ten primary schools. One of the aims of the research was listed as seeking to establish - from findings - a model of primary school headship which would help to explain the complex, ambiguous and (at times) problematic nature of the job as experienced by practising headteachers.

The application was rejected. In her letter the Senior Research Officer (Research & Statistics) stated that 'The whole exercise did, however, seem rather time consuming' and that 'concern was expressed that a focus on a model of primary school headship is perhaps not the most productive way to explore a leadership' It was suggested that the headteacher/researcher should discuss a more 'fruitful' way of spending his time with the head of the Authority's Primary Management Centre.

The head of the Primary Management Centre in fact

supported the original application. In order to satisfy personnel at the Authority's Research and Statistics department a second, modified, application was submitted in June 1986 which requested involvement with only four primary school headteachers. This second application was successful.

The consequence of the rejection of the original application to work with approximately ten schools inevitable shaped the scope of the study. However, in retrospect, it would have been difficult to have obtained the depth and richness of data which the present investigation finally achieved had a larger number of schools and respondents been involved. Also, there could have been problems as to the reliability of data collected from governors, parents and children.

The four headteachers: their social location, selection and rough match.

As was explained in the Preface, the four primary school headteachers who took part in the investigation worked for the I.L.E.A. in one of its ten administrative divisions. The administrative division corresponds to one of the inner London boroughs and for the purpose of the present investigation it is given the fictitious name of Chesley.

The four headteachers were selected by the Divisional Primary Inspector for the borough of Chesley.

Chesley is an inner-city borough and the Divisional Education Office had responsibility for:-

- 2 nursery schools
- 72 primary schools (which includes some  
separate infant and  
junior schools)
- 6 special schools
- 10 secondary schools

The borough of Chesley faces severe social and economic problems. The I.L.E.A. is described in an HMI Report on educational provision within the Authority as follows:-

'The pupil population of inner London contains a large number of disadvantaged children. In addition, about 40% are from ethnic minority groups and one in ten of all pupils speaks a mother tongue which is not English. Significant parts of the area suffer from urban decay and some have changing populations. The I.L.E.A. is faced with a combination of problems to an extent probably unmatched elsewhere in England and Wales.'

D.E.S.,. 1980, Report by the HMI on Educational Provision by the I.L.E.A.

The I.L.E.A.'s Research and Statistics Branch produced the following information on primary schools within the Borough of Chesley in 1985, and it serves to illustrate something of the social and educational context within which the four headteachers worked while taking part in the investigation.



Table 3/2

Social and Educational context at the four schools	
Measure	Percentage
Parents Unemployed	31.8
Parents in Unskilled and Manual Occupations	27.6
Parents in Non-Manual Occupations	14.0
Parents eligible for Free Meals	53.9
Pupils from One Parent Families	28.8
Pupils who do not speak English at home	31.1
Ethnic Group - English, Scots, Welsh, Irish	38.6
Ethnic Group - Afro-Caribbean	24.7
Ethnic Group - Asian	17.3
Figures relating to the Borough of Chesley Primary Schools in 1985. From Hunter, J. et al, 1985 <u>Children in Need: The Growing            Needs of Inner London School Children</u> (RS 994/85), I.L.E.A.	

Commenting on the above figures, William Percival (1987, Page 6), (Associate Inspector for the Education Authority) writes:-

"It will cause no surprise to discover that such a scale and multiplicity of factors of deprivation are reflected in the education performance and progress of the school age children living in the Division. This relatively poor performance has been reflected in the levels of literacy especially at the vital primary stage. The evidence for this has come from the London Reading Test given annually to all pupils in their final primary school year. ... The London Reading Test identifies a cut off point below which pupils transferring to secondary education will lack the language competence to enable them to cope with significant areas of the secondary school curriculum. Taking the figures for 1983 it was estimated by the Divisional Inspector that 38.5% of Chesley children transferring at the age of 11 fell into this category.'

On a basic personal/school information sheet (described below) each of the headteachers were asked how they would describe the pupil intake of their school. The headteachers' responses are reproduced below in order to give some idea of this characteristic of each school and the context within which each headteacher worked as perceived by the headteachers themselves.

#### Headteacher 1's description of the School's pupil intake.

"A mixed intake from what is relatively speaking a stable community. 20 -25% Afro Caribbean, 5% Turkish plus a mix of Spanish, Greek, Italian, North & South Vietnamese. Housing in the catchment area is expensive and rising rapidly. Growing middle class intake, both black and white. Parents are very interested in education, e.g. 13 parents stood for 4 places on the Governing Body and over 500 votes were cast.

#### Headteacher 2's description of the school's pupil intake.

"The children at Oldfield mainly come from working-class backgrounds but we do have a small number of children of middle-class professional parents, mainly in the infant classes. Many of our children come from quite deprived backgrounds (even by Chesley standards) and we have more than our fair share of children with special needs. The school has a genuine ethnic mix and no ethnic group dominates numerically. 31% of the children speak English as a second language, the main second language groups being Bengali and Turkish speakers, we also have small groups of children who speak Punjabi, Arabic, Persian, Vietnamese, Chinese,

Yoruba, Somali, Greek, Spanish and German."

Headteacher 3's description of the school's pupil intake.

"Pottersview has a high turn-over rate (45%) of pupils for whom English is a second language. These children and their families constitute a major part of the hotel community within the catchment area. The school also has 31 other languages represented, though these are children from the 'stable' core of the catchment population."

Headteacher 4's description of the school's pupil intake.

'1/3 Afro-Caribbean  
1/3 indigenous  
1/3 mixture - Asian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Turkish  
and other.

Mostly "working class" at least 2/3 free meals.  
Many 1 parent families and a lot in poor accommodation.'

The four headteachers were selected by the  
Divisional Primary Inspector on the following criteria:-

- (1) Headteachers held by the Inspector to be successful in their work.
- (2) Headteachers willing to take part in the investigation.
- (3) Headteachers with between 3 and 6 years of headship experience at 31st October 1986
- (4) Headship experience to have been within the one school, excluding any short-term acting headship.
- (5) Primary schools (i.e. J.M & I) of Burnham Groups 4 or 5, with a nursery class.
- (6) Primary schools within the Borough of Chesham.
- (7) County primary schools - not Church of England, Roman Catholic or other voluntary aided schools.
- (8) Primary schools where the Deputy Head had responsibility for teaching a class.

It transpired that two headteachers were male and two were female. Table 3/3 overleaf illustrates the rough match of headteacher and school statistical characteristics.

Table 3/3

Rough match of headteacher and school  
statistical characteristics

	Headship experience at 31st Oct. 1986	Number of children on roll at 31st Oct. 1986	Number of children on roll last diary day	Burnham Group	
Headteacher 1 (Male)	3yrs. 7mths.	252 Nursery 50 part time	350 Nursery 50 part time	5	Also responsi- bilitiy for a Language Delay Unit for 20 children who are included in figures given.
Headteacher 2 (Male)	5yrs. 5mths.	253 Nursery 25 full time	275 Nursery 25 full time	4	
Headteacher 3 (Female)	5yrs. 1mth.	179 Nursery 15 full time 20 part time	177 Nursery 15 full time 20 part time	4	
Headteacher 4 (Female)	3yrs. 0 mths. plus 2 terms acting elsewhere	196* Nursery 10 full time 45 part time	178 Nursery 15 full time 15 part time	4	

\* Roll as at the 19th December 1986

Throughout the period in which data were being collected (October 1986 to July 1987) most schools within the Borough of Chesley were affected by teachers' industrial action which was principally to do with the Government having abolished the teachers' pay and conditions negotiating machinery. The action involved the withdrawal of 'goodwill'. This generally meant no after school work or staff meetings; no cover, or limited cover, for absent colleagues; no helping with school meals and no participation in extra curricular activities. Each of the four headteachers taking part in the investigation were in sympathy with the teachers' industrial action (one headteacher was a member of one of the trade unions taking industrial action) and, to varying degrees, all four schools were affected. However the four headteachers felt that throughout the period their relationships with their teaching staff remained intact.

The teachers' industrial action was closely related to the Borough of Chesley's growing shortage of teachers, particularly supply teachers to cover absences. Headteachers of schools in Chesley formed a Headteachers Action Committee which gave a press conference at the House of Commons in May 1987 to publicize what was seen as a staffing crisis. In its press release the Action Committee stated that the Borough of Chesley began the school year in September 1986 short of 30 primary school teachers.

At the time of the interviews with the four headteachers (January and February 1987), **Headteacher 2's** school was a teacher short (the children were at home, not having been able to start in the infant reception class) and one class being taught by a temporary teacher. The nursery class at **Headteacher 4's** school was closed because there was no teacher.

In the interview with each of the headteachers they were asked whether industrial action or the teacher shortage were affecting their job, and their responses are reported

in Chapter Four (Questionnaire and interview studies).

At the level of everyday practice, significant aspects of the teachers' industrial action and the teacher shortage - i.e. significant in so far as they generated some kind of activity or comment on the part of the headteacher - were recorded in the diaries and appear in the investigation's finding, particularly Appendix 3.

Generally, the four schools functioned normally during the period of data collection, except for the teacher shortages mentioned above and the specific issues mentioned in the interviews and/or recorded in the diaries.

Research design: methods, time scale and procedure for data collection.

October 1986 - Basic information sheet and questionnaire.

A basic personal/school information sheet was completed by each of the four headteachers. This collected information on the number of children in the school; a description of the school's pupil intake; details of headship experience and the headteacher's home address and telephone number.

A questionnaire, consisting of two open-ended questions was completed by each of the four headteachers. The two open-ended questions were aimed at collecting a description of his or her job (in rough notes or otherwise) from each headteacher and to ask if there was anything that he or she would like to gain from being involved in the investigation.

These documents were issued by post to **Headteachers 1, 2 and 3** on 10th October 1986 and to **Headteacher 4** on 13th December 1986. **Headteacher 4** was added two months after the selection of the other three headteachers to provide a fourth case study.

The purpose and findings of the questionnaire are discussed in Chapter 4.

January/February 1987 - Semi-structured recorded interview.

A semi-structured interview was carried out with each of the four headteachers during January or February 1987, using an interview guide which consisted of twelve principal open-ended questions with subsequent follow-up questions and probes. The interview was recorded on audio tape.

Eleven of the principal questions focused on a particular aspect of the individual headteacher's experience and views of primary school headship. One principal question aimed to explore the implications, from the individual headteacher's point of view, of the interviewer/researcher being a fellow headteacher within the same local education authority.

In order to base as much of the interview as possible in the respondent's perspective, and consequently make its content more 'inviting' and more meaningful to the headteacher, much of the information that helped in formulating the questions and probes was drawn from the individual headteacher's written response to the open-ended questionnaire asking for rough notes of "a description of your job as headteacher of X primary school".

The semi-structured interview collects the individual headteacher's perceptions of her or his job at reflective interview level and the interview and its findings are discussed in Chapter Four. In Chapter Eight the interview data are considered as spoken discourse with reference to the subjectivity of the headteachers' accounts.

January/June 1987 - The Diary

A specially designed diary (piloted between October and December 1986) is the investigation's principal research instrument. Its purpose was to collect the four headteachers' descriptions of, and responses to, the activities which they saw as constituting their daily workload on five given working days (Monday to Friday) spread over a period of five or six months between January and June 1987.

The diary was designed to overcome the criticism of diary method made by Mintzberg (1973) that it has 'proven to be a useful tool for the study of managerial work characteristics, but a useless one for the study of work content'. Design and precoding are issues which underpin the advantages and weaknesses of diary as a means of collecting data. These issues, together with the purpose, procedure and rationale of the diary used in the investigation are discussed in Chapter Five. Chapter Six deals with the analysis of diary data in relation to Headteachers' perceptions of the content of their everyday workload and in Chapter Seven the diaries are examined as written discourse.

June/July 1987 - Questionnaire on completing the diary.

After completion of the diary each of the four headteachers responded to a questionnaire (consisting of four open-ended questions) giving information about:-

- their particular method of filling in the diary;
- any difficulties they experienced in completing it;
- their opinion as to its accuracy and possible shortcomings;

and

- their overall feeling about completing it.



The data collected via the questionnaire is used in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

### Reliability.

Reliability is defined as the extent to which a study can be replicated (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984). The complexity of the phenomena investigated and the investigation's exploratory objectives and methodology would make it difficult to achieve a precise reconstruction of the present investigation in the way that quantitative research can be replicated. However, another researcher could achieve almost similar results and reliability has been promoted throughout the report by the presentation of a clear account of the processes by which data were collected and analysed.

### Validity.

The researcher carrying out the present investigation also being a primary school headteacher in the same inner London borough as the four participant primary school headteachers puts him in the position of being an 'informed insider'. Because of this, throughout every stage of data collection and analysis great care was taken not to take anything for granted and to guard against perceptual biases.

The position of the researcher being in reality a headteacher/researcher is seen as strengthening the validity of the investigation because of the common professional meanings that he and the four participant headteachers share and use to make sense of their jobs. The four headteachers remarked, in different ways, that they had found it helpful that the reflective interview has been with a fellow headteacher. Perhaps **Headteacher 2's** comments sum up the headteachers' feelings:

"It's been a very satisfying experience because the questioning has come from, you know, a position of, you know, knowledge and empathy and so on. I'd have found it frustrating answering the questions posed by some body who didn't have a full knowledge of the job."

Throughout the investigation of the headteachers' activities and responses, analysis retains, basically, the categories and descriptions used by the four headteachers when completing the diary.

The methods of data collection - questionnaire, interview and diary - were used specifically as being the most suitable for collecting headteachers' perceptions, and do not raise the issues of observer effect that are relevant to participant observation methods. However, as discussed at various points in the investigation, the use of the diary and the responses given in the reflective interview raise questions of credibility. The position of the headteacher/researcher as an 'informed insider' helped to check for any omissions of relevant data <sup>and</sup> apparent 'misreporting' in the interviews. It also helped to check, to some degree, that the diaries were used well and truthfully.

### Triangulation.

The research technique of triangulation is used to check the validity of the investigation's methods and findings.

Denzin (1978), page 101 states that

'Triangulation directs the observer to combine multiple data sources, research methods, theoretical perspectives, and observers in the collection, inspection and analysis of behaviour specimens.'

As Cohen & Manion (1985) point out, any single research method acts as a filter through which the

environment is selectively experienced; the method cannot be atheoretical or neutral in the collection and analysis of data or in the presentation of findings. Therefore, exclusive reliance on a single method could bias or distort findings.

Similarly, the collection of data from a single source, or a small number of sources, can limit the validity of research finding. However, in a data intensive study, such as the present investigation, the number of data sources has to be limited (in order to achieve the depth of investigation required for the purpose of the research) otherwise the work would not be manageable within the resources available.

The fact that the researcher of the present investigation is a primary school headteacher within the Borough of Chesley also serves, to some degree, to check the validity of the four headteacher's accounts. Other implications of the researcher being a primary school headteacher are discussed in Chapter Four.

In the present investigation triangulation is achieved:-

- a. across methods - questionnaire, interview and diary, and :
- b. across sources and perspectives - case studies of four headteachers.

## Summary

The investigation sets out to collect four primary school headteachers' subjective descriptions of the content of their everyday workload on five days spread over a period of five or six months. The investigation's four-fold theoretical framework was formulated from a search of the literature on educational management, the headteacher/researcher's twelve years experience as a primary school headteacher (in two schools) and the results of a pilot study.

The four headteachers worked in an inner London borough which corresponds to one of the Inner London Educational Authority's ten Divisions. The four headteachers were selected to take part in the investigation by the Divisional Primary Inspector on an eight-point criteria, the first requirement of which was that they were experienced and successful headteachers.

Case study method was adopted after considering a range of alternative methods, and data were collected by means of a specially designed diary (which is discussed in Chapters Five and Seven), questionnaire and interview. Triangulation is achieved across methods (questionnaire, interview and diary) and across sources and perspectives - i.e. case studies of four headteachers. The researcher also being a primary school headteacher within the inner London borough in which data were collected serves, to some degree, to check the validity of the four respondents accounts.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Questionnaire and interview studies: purpose and findings.

#### The questionnaire.

The questionnaire was completed by each of the four headteachers before their interview took place in January or February 1987 and it contained two open-ended questions which were:-

- 1        On any paper, please write down - in rough notes or otherwise - a description of your job as headteacher of X Primary School.  
  
          For example: Can you say what the job involves? Jot down your goals, any particular achievements, difficulties, satisfactions and dissatisfactions.
- 2        From what you now know of the Study, albeit briefly explained, can you tell me how the kind of information and involvement being asked of you (and the other headteachers) might be turned to your advantage? Is there anything that you would like to achieve from being involved in the Study of primary school headship?

#### The first open-ended question.

The purpose of the first open-ended question was four-fold:-

- 1        To ascertain the ways in which the headteachers made sense of their job. Specifically, collecting the concepts and structures used by the headteachers in their attempts to write (albeit briefly) about such a broad, personal and ambiguous topic as their experience of primary school headship.
- 2        To use the headteachers' written responses as a basis and a focus for the interview: to base at least part of the interview in terms familiar to the individual headteacher.
- 3        It was thought that a written response to such a broad question might prove easier for the headteachers to supply, and may yield information that would not necessarily come to light with the use of a more structured questionnaire or in an

interview.

- 4 Closely connected with (3) above, written responses have a quality of their own in that the writer has more time to formulate her/his ideas and can edit and extend responses in the light of time and reflection. Also, by the very nature of written discourse, the writer has to be more explicit than if talking in an interview. Thus data yielded from written discourse was felt to have a valuable quality of its own when dealing with such a broad, personal and ambiguous topic as primary school headship experience.

The second open-ended question.

The purpose of the second open-ended question was to find out whether the headteachers' saw any ways in which they could personally benefit from their involvement in the investigation. This was seen as a return for their valuable and very much appreciated willingness to take part in the investigation.

**Headteacher 1** saw his involvement in the investigation as an opportunity to reflect on his job/role.

**Headteacher 2** thought it was too early in his involvement in the investigation to answer the question. His concern, in his written response, was with the changing nature of primary school headship and the increasing demands this put on the headteacher.

**Headteacher 3** responded by saying that any information or discussion on management skills - associated with 'good practice' and the identification of potential stress related areas - and the sharing of achievements and failures would be found useful.

**Headteacher 4** hoped to achieve a clearer understanding of what she 'really ought to be doing' by being able to talk about the job and by sharing ideas about 'this peculiar occupation'.

**Headteacher 4** thought that some reassurance would be helpful to her in what is sometimes an isolated job:-

'... .. having said how 'alone' I sometimes feel, I think I've already found it a great relief to be able to talk about that (ie. responding to the first question). It's been very useful to have to think about what I do - usually I'm far too busy doing it or evolving strategies for not doing the bits I don't like. I think sharing the ideas about this peculiar occupation should help me to clarify my own and hopefully I'll be able to shed some of the inessentials. I'm sure I do a lot of things I don't need and could delegate more.'

### The Interview.

The purpose of the semi-structured interview carried out with each of the four headteachers was to collect the individual headteacher's perceptions of his or her job at reflective interview level.

The four audio taped interviews were carried out between January and February 1987 (ie. after the questionnaire had been completed and before the issue of the diary), using an interview guide which consisted of twelve principal open-ended questions, with probes and follow-up questions where necessary. The interview guide helped to achieve comparability across the four interviews.

The twelve principal questions were formulated in the light of what the four headteachers wrote in their responses to the questionnaire in order to base the interview in the headteachers' perspective. The twelve principal questions provided a focus for the interview while at the same time maintaining an open-endedness that would yield the headteachers' subjective descriptions and views of the job.

At the beginning of the interview it was explained to the four headteachers that the interview guide was of secondary importance if they felt the need to deviate from

it in the process of giving their subjective descriptions and views about their job as a primary school headteacher. In fact, none of the four headteachers felt the need to deviate from the twelve principal questions.

Confidentiality was stressed at the beginning of the interview, and at the end each headteacher was asked if there was anything that they would like altered or erased from the tape; all four headteachers gave a negative reply to the latter.

It was explained to the headteachers that if they found a particular question difficult to answer without time to think it over, they could leave it aside and provide a written response later. This option was not used by any of the four headteachers.

The tenth question (below) was designed to give the headteachers the opportunity to add any information that they felt important and had been overlooked in the interview. **Headteacher 1** was the only headteacher to use this opportunity, and he wished to add the importance of the headteacher's understanding of, and involvement in, the curriculum to his response about the essentials of the job.

Essentially, the twelve open-ended questions aimed at collecting information on the following:-

1. The task of providing a written description of the job of a specific instance of primary school headship.
2. Response to **Headteacher 1**'s statement that 'the job is enormous, vague and never completed'.
3. Preparation for primary school headship and early experience.
4. Naming difficulties or dissatisfactions of the job.



Teacher shortage, industrial action and stress.

5. Naming satisfactions and enjoyable aspects of the job.
6. Particular priorities, aims or philosophy .
7. Style or approach to the job of primary school headship.
8. Essentials of the job/Main headings of a job description.
9. Effect of the job on the headteacher's private life.
10. Anything that the headteacher felt had been overlooked and should be added.
11. Summing up: overall feeling about the job.
12. Implications of the researcher also being a fellow headteacher and feeling about the interview.  
Opportunity to erase or alter any part of the recorded interview.

Each of the four interviews lasted between approximately one hour and one hour and ten minutes. This included the researcher's introductory comments about:

the general purpose and open-endedness of the interview;  
confidentiality;  
the importance of asking what could appear obvious questions in order not to take anything for granted;  
possibility of written responses to questions that needed time to reflection;  
the secondary nature of the interview guide if the headteacher wished to deviate from it (discussed above); and  
opportunity to alter or erase anything from the interview.

The interview has a particular value in the present investigation in that it augments data collected by the principal research instrument (ie. the specially designed diary) and it also serves as a form of triangulation across methods and across the four case studies.

By reflecting on their experiences of headship the headteachers explained things about the job that are implicit, taken for granted, and would not necessarily come to light (a) through the use of the diary or (b) to an observer.

The researcher also being a fellow headteacher helped to check the validity of the headteachers' accounts of their experiences, and a position was taken by the researcher that avoided the possibility of anything being taken for granted or misunderstood because of his being an 'informed insider'.

#### Presentation of the questionnaire and interview findings.

The findings of the questionnaire and interview are inter-related because the interview questions were formulated in the light of what the four headteachers wrote in their written responses to the questionnaire. The two sources, questionnaire and interview, have been combined to construct the four reflective accounts of primary school headship experience which are presented below.

In Chapter Seven the data collected by means of the specially designed diary and the headteachers' job descriptions are considered from the methodological perspective of their being in the medium of written discourse and what this written discourse might reveal about the headteachers' perceptions. Chapter Eight is an examination of the interview data with reference to the subjectivity of the four headteachers' reflective accounts of their job.

Headteacher 1 - reflective account of primary school  
headship experience at Stratton Primary School

**Headteacher 1's** written description of his job as a headteacher of Stratton Primary School was relatively brief (140 words), and was accompanied by four pages describing a specific day. The latter was seen by **Headteacher 1** as a good way of expressing what typically happens during his working day - ie. the best way of overcoming the difficulty of describing the complex phenomenon of primary school headship in everyday practice. The written description began with the statement that 'the job is enormous, vague and never completed'. The rest of the written description was concerned with (1) the fact that **Headteacher 1's** job had been to take on the difficult task of amalgamating an infant and a junior school and (2) that much of his job, his style, 'is to try and juggle long-term aims with short-term aims'.

The task of describing the job.

In answer to the question, How did you find the task of having to write a description of your job as headteacher of Stratton Primary School?, **Headteacher 1** replied:-

'Not difficult as an exercise. The difficulty was knowing where to start and knowing how to prioritise things. Thinking at the back of the question was, it is obvious there are lots of aspects to the job, which ones are the most important? And I think that if you'd asked me about 'headship' non-specific that would have been easier than headship specifically. Because, you can have all the grand plans, theories and philosophies before hand, but once in post that's got to be modified very quickly to meet local conditions and circumstances.'

What the main heading might be in writing a job description.

When asked to enlarge on his statement that 'the job is enormous, vague and never completed' **Headteacher 1** said that even after a satisfactory day he still goes home knowing that certain things are left undone. The things not

completed include meeting specific requests from local education authority, from the D.E.S., individuals, N.F.E.R., colleges of education and from university departments. Many of these requests need to be met in the interests of the school, but it was felt that 'more vague things like the whole Section 11 submissions of evidence and things, that's rather more demanding time-wise'.

To **Headteacher 1** things get left undone, and the job becomes unsatisfactory, when he is drawn into doing little more than 'holding the fort':-

'The job for me loses its excitement if all I'm doing is holding the fort. I don't think that's where I want to be. I don't want to be standing still, holding things together. And there are people, there're inspectors, who actually say, who encourage us to believe that if we're doing that, we're doing more than many other colleagues in the inner-city.'

The vagueness of the job is seen as stemming from the variety of tasks within the workload. The consequence of the combination of the large volume work and the variety of tasks is that 'to do the job skilfully you have to be juggling', you need to make priorities and delegate work to other staff.

The main headings of a job definition, in relation to the nature of the work, were summed up by **Headteacher 1** as the need to be able to see things in the short-term and in the long-term, 'but if you're locked into one way of thinking you'll be undone'. Being locked into dealing with the short-term is seen as trying to deal personally with every task that needs doing - 'seat of the pants management' - which can be exciting but is not seen as the best use of headteacher time. Alternatively, if the headteacher is always focusing on long-term objectives, he or she is seen by **Headteacher 1** as being of no day-to-day use to most people that he or she works with; it creates a remoteness and a lack of credibility in the eyes of all staff.

**Headteacher 1's** criteria for doing the job are:-

being able to switch between short-term and long-term objectives;

being able to manage time and personal energy; and  
knowing that some issues are worth pursuing and others are not.

Preparation for primary school headship.

**Headteacher 1** felt that he had a very good preparation for his headship, much of which he engineered himself. This first headship was an amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools on the same site; a task which **Headteacher 1** said was fraught with difficulties for which there was no way he could have been adequately prepared.

Preparation for headship actually consisted of:-

1. Regular weekly meetings (January to March) with the primary inspectors for Chesley.
2. Some visits to the school.
3. Meetings with various personnel within the Divisional Education Office - eg. Teaching Staff, School Management, Wages, etc.
4. Learning something about the inspectors' and officers' aims and objectives.
5. Finding out rather less about the school than he would have liked.

Being a Deputy Head for seven years (and covering for a headteacher who was out of school a good deal) prepared **Headteacher 1** well for headship, though he stressed that covering for the headteacher is not actually the same as being a headteacher. As Deputy he said that he only had to ensure the smooth running of the school and did not have to make any serious decisions.

**Headteacher 1's** advice to someone about to begin their first headship in Chesley would be to prepare for it physically and not rush into things too early in the excitement of the new job. And to have a timetable or a time scale 'for actually growing into the job'.

Naming difficulties or dissatisfactions of the job.

Things that **Headteacher 1** finds difficult and dissatisfying about the job are those tasks which 'take you away from what is the main task in hand, which is the education and progress of the children'. Specifically, problems associated with the local education authority not being able to guarantee the provision of teachers; being bogged down in getting routine jobs done and having to deal with problems that are the job of other agencies such as the medical profession and social workers. Communications between schools and other professions are not as good as **Headteacher 1** would like them to be.

**Headteacher 1** believes that stress is part of the job, as it is part of life; he would rather be in a situation where he had stress than in one where he did not. **Headteacher 1** enjoys the job and does not find it stressful, though he says that there are stressful phases. For example, parents are low on Monday mornings and bring weekend-accumulated problems into school which are mainly domestic and accommodation issues. He also cites 'end of the week fed-upness and illness creeping in', and the greater stress that occurs at the end of term in the urge to get things done, particularly administrative tasks.

The shortage of teachers in Chesley was affecting the running of the school in that there were generally no supply teachers to cover for teachers absent through sickness or for in-service training purposes.

Industrial action by teachers was felt to be making certain things difficult. Staff meetings were in operation

again, though industrial action had stifled thorough discussion, staff development and the development of the school. It had affected the school's reputation with parents. Organisation was difficult to bring about (ie. because of the lack of whole-school meetings) and generally morale was low.

However, since teachers were not attending after-school off site local education authority meetings for in-service, **Headteacher 1** found that the teachers had found support strategies and strengths within the school, bringing the whole staff together in mutual support.

If **Headteacher 1** could change one thing about his job he would like to be able to plan with more confidence. For example, know that he had people in post, know what future resources are and generally know more than he actually does - 'there is a lot of uncertainty in the air'. (Some of the uncertainties that **Headteacher 1** referred to stemmed from the proposed abolition of the local education authority for which he worked and from forthcoming government legislation.)

#### Naming satisfactions and enjoyable aspects of the job.

Satisfying and enjoyable aspects of the job for **Headteacher 1** are:-

"In a nutshell it is actually seeing, over a period of time - sometimes it's over a term, sometimes it's longer than that - actually seeing the development, the learning development that takes place. Or, and secondary, would be, to see a really exciting phase that a teacher and a class are going through because of a topic they've chosen, because of a visit they've made. Something that has been planned that has worked better than anybody could have dreamt of.'

### Particular priorities, aims or philosophy.

Central to **Headteacher 1**'s aims and priorities is the atmosphere in the school which he sees as having to do with relationships between everyone in school - creating a family atmosphere.

Secondly, his priority is the right environment and resources. This includes the use of the building and the site as a learning resource. At Stratton Primary School **Headteacher 1**, the staff, children and others have created an ecological garden that can be used all the year round, not just for natural history learning, but also as a vehicle for work in science, maths, language, the arts and other curricular areas.

### Style or approach to the job of headship.

**Headteacher 1** found it easier to say what his style of, or approach to, headship was not. Not democratic or autocratic or benevolent dictator, or any such clearly defined style or approach. **Headteacher 1** sees himself as often different things. Often very generous and benevolent; sometimes 'up tight about things' and feeling that he has to 'take a more independent line'; and sometimes be autocratic. He sees most decisions as having to be made in consultation with other staff, but he also feels that there are times when the headteacher has to make a decision - 'grasp the nettle, get on with it. And take the flack that comes with it very often'.

### Essentials of the job.

When asked what he thought were the essentials of primary school headship as he experiences it, **Headteacher 1** pointed out the danger of 'distilling' headship and making it meaningless in practical terms. His list of the essentials of his job is given below:



1. You cannot do it as an escape from the classroom.
2. You need a lot of energy.
3. You need patience.
4. You have got to listen.
5. You have got to be able to reflect.
6. Not to stick doggedly to certain aims that you may have held but circumstances now necessitate a change.
7. 'You've got to remember that you're not going to create the perfect kingdom.'
8. You have to accept flaws and weaknesses within yourself and within other people.
9. You have got to be able to accept that it is a responsible position and accept any consequences once in post.
10. An understanding of the curriculum.

**Headteacher 1** emphasised the centrality of the curriculum in any account of primary school headship:-

'A prerequisite for headship is an understanding of the curriculum and a real passion for certain areas of the curriculum. I don't think we have to be experts in every aspect of it. But I think part of our credibility with staff stems from not just being in the job but having a working knowledge, a thorough working knowledge, and to be able to speak with some conviction, about certain areas of the curriculum.'

He cited colleagues who had been appointed to headship for having qualities of leadership and being good managers but not having any credibility when it came to discussing and demonstrating the curriculum.

**Headteacher 1** sees the terms of leadership and management as too vague to be applicable to primary school headship. They are 'a fair crack at it if you've got to reduce it to, if we're down to reducing it to the minimum

terms'.

Effect of the job on private life.

**Headteacher 1** sees the job as affecting his private life only rarely. These rare occasions are more likely to affect him in terms of mood when he has been disappointed, for example, because of staffing problems or when there are problems beyond his influence and control.

**Headteacher 1** is not sure that primary school headship is a unique job. He feels that if he knew more about the caring professions, such as social services and hospitals, there would be people in similar positions to headteachers.

Overall feeling about the job.

**Headteacher 1's** overall feeling about his job at Stratton Primary School was that it is satisfying, demanding and rewarding.

More specifically, he enjoys the support of colleagues, and enjoys seeing colleagues develop and grow professionally. Likewise he enjoys seeing the children develop and grow. **Headteacher 1** is reasonably satisfied with the school's development, though not complacent, and is always thinking about long-term plans. The latter are the aspects of the job that he takes home with him.

"The real excitement of the job is achieving consensus. So that we have policies which when put into operation ensure that real and satisfactory learning takes place."

One issue that currently worries **Headteacher 1** is that with so many changes in the inspectorate and in local education authority personnel there is a danger of such people judging the school on a 'snap-shot' view, without any knowledge of its true development.

**Headteacher 1** feels that he is successfully doing his job, but perhaps not to his own high standards, as yet. He sees his best achievement at Stratton as putting a sense of pride into 'being here, working here and coming to school here'.

When asked about what might worry him because it was not being achieved, **Headteacher 1** thought that it was not so much a question of things not being achieved, but rather the 'rate' of achievement not being as he wished.

Implications of the researcher also being a fellow headteacher and feeling about the interview.

**Headteacher 1** felt good about the interview and that the interviewer being a fellow headteacher had had positive consequences. He felt that by talking to someone in the same job he gained a more sympathetic response - not necessarily agreement - than he does when talking to inspectors.

Headteacher 2 - reflective account of primary school  
headship experience at Oldfield Primary School.

**Headteacher 2** provided a detailed written description of the content of his job as headteacher of Oldfield Primary School in the form of a list of tasks and concerns. **Headteacher 2** also listed some goals, achievements, difficulties, satisfactions and dissatisfactions and this information is incorporated into the relevant sections of this reflective account. **Headteacher 2's** written job description is reproduced in full below:

Headteacher of Oldfield Primary School  
- Job Description

- 1      Day-to-day running of school
  - a)      arrange cover for absence
  - b)      discipline and general control of children
  - c)      parents - dealing with minor and major problems
  - d)      children's welfare - contact with E.W.S, social services and school health, F.A. procedures and educational psychologist
  - e)      assemblies
  - f)      administration
  - g)      liaise with school secretary
  - h)      liaise with school keeper on repairs, lettings, etc.
  - i)      liaise with teaching staff on day-to-day issues
  - j)      liaise with non-teaching staff
  - k)      meet with deputy to discuss daily running of school
  - l)      teaching
  - m)      dinner duty
  - n)      dealing with accidents to pupils
  - o)      check that delegated work is being carried out
  - p)      welcome visitors and arrange for them to be shown around the school
  - q)      students - arrange their visits
- 2      Medium-term commitments
  - a)      Teaching - I have a teaching commitment which involves me in teaching every Thursday to cover for the maths development course. I take story three times per week to release staff and I take a fourth year junior class sized-group for literature work once a week. I also share the cover with colleagues who do not have class responsibilities.

- b) Staff meetings - Organise and chair general business staff meetings. Plan, in conjunction with deputy and post-holder, curriculum meetings and work-shops.
  - c) Advisory teachers - Work closely with advisory staff to ensure that various initiatives and projects are being carried out.
  - d) P.T.A. - Attend all P.T.A. meetings and liaise elsewhere with P.T.A. committee.
  - e) Governors - Attend governors meetings and prepare termly and annual reviews.
  - f) Admissions - Carry out authority admissions procedures, meet new parents and tell them about the school.
  - g) Probationer teachers and new staff - Work closely with new staff and ensure adequate support and resources.
  - h) Appointment of new staff - Advertising, interviews, etc.
  - i) Teachers - Regular meetings with post-holders about their work.
- 3 Long-term commitments and goals
- a) Curriculum - Long-term (2 - 3 years) curriculum planning in the form of a school development plan.
  - b) Recruitment of new staff - Lobbying for quality teachers
  - c) Secondary transfer - Making sure parents get as much help and information as possible
  - d) A.U.R. - Lobbying for more resources, appeals, etc.
  - e) School journeys -
  - f) Special events and assemblies - Cultural and religious festivals, sporting events and events like a book week for example
  - g) Responding to special authority initiatives
  - h) Ethos of school - of the utmost importance, once established it has to be maintained.

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### Goals

Improve standards of literacy and numeracy

Raise achievement of individual children  
Improve special needs provision  
Broaden curriculum  
Try and set up areas of excellence within the curriculum

#### Achievements

Improved quality of learning  
Improved quality of curriculum  
Created a positive ethos within school  
Improved image of school

#### Difficulties

Demoralised teaching and non-teaching staff (now a thing of the past)  
Poor building

#### Satisfactions

seeing the school improve, acknowledge the good resources ILEA can offer

#### Dissatisfactions

Teacher shortage, could wreck all of above and cause me to consider leaving, also present state of authority - low morale, political interference, insensitive demands on schools and a general feeling that heads are not valued.

At first glance **Headteacher 2's** list appears similar to the list of tasks and skills of primary school headship provided by Dean (1987) and discussed in Chapter 1. However, on examination it can be seen that Dean's list is prescriptive - a useful theoretical overview - rather than a description of what actually happens. **Headteacher 2's** list is grounded in what actually happens in everyday practice, and it is compatible with the picture of **Headteacher 2** going about his daily work as yielded by data from his diary. It is the personal nature of **Headteacher 2's** job description - his interpretation of the job and his priorities - that makes his document of value to the present investigation into headteachers' perceptions of their job in everyday practice.

#### The task of describing the job.

**Headteacher 2** found the task of writing the job description easy. He had given some thought to the nature of his job, and the job of his Deputy, prior to receiving the questionnaire. In putting together the job description reproduced above **Headteacher 2** broke down the content of his job into what he does every day, what he does by the week/term and by the year.

#### Is the job enormous, vague and never completed?

When asked for his reaction to his fellow headteacher's statement that the job is enormous, vague and never completed, **Headteacher 2** agreed that it is certainly enormous and never completed:

'... ... because of the nature of primary education nowadays, it's a sort of situation where you can always do better. Even if an aspect of the curriculum has been fairly extended in your school, you can always take it further. So if you went into the most advanced primary school in the whole of Great Britain, you could always then say, but, you know, the work in clay could just be taken a stage further. Or the photography, oh that's great but - ? So it's endless. It is really endless. Just because of the nature of the curriculum.'

**Headteacher 2** felt that the job could be enormous in other ways, for example he cited staff development as being an endless process.

The workload is seen as enormous and often unplanned. **Headteacher 2** stressed his having to be careful not to get drawn into 'run of the mill problems' (ie. issues not directly related to the curriculum, pupils or teachers and generally to do with parents) because that was seen as a 'bottomless pit and we're not running a social services department'. 'On a day-to-day point of view, the day-to-day running of the school, you have to say to yourself well, what is worth your time and what isn't?'

**Headteacher 2** was not sure whether the job is vague. He saw it rather as a question of making the right priorities, a skill which only comes with experience:

'I'm not so sure that it's terribly vague. I think it's up to us to define the job and get on with it and not get lost and not be unsure about what we're supposed to do.'

#### Preparation for primary school headship.

**Headteacher 2** found his early headship experience daunting, because he took on a school which was considered to be a 'sink school' and he had the task of amalgamating an

infant and a junior school: both of these factors attracted him to the job, being then 'young and reasonably energetic'.

**Headteacher 2** felt that he got good preparation for his appointment to Oldfield from the inspectorate and from the Divisional Education Officer. The reason for this was two-fold:

- 1) The school had enormous problems - it was an unhappy school where the headteacher was not coping and there were headteacher/staff conflicts and tensions. (One inspector said that if he could drag Oldfield School into the middle of the North Sea and leave it there he would.)
- 2) Being an amalgamation meant that the Divisional Education Officer had to spend time with **Headteacher 2** working on the technicalities involved in the operation.

Being Deputy Head for four years in an unhappy and unsatisfactorily run school **Headteacher 2** learned 'surviving and politics'. However, previously he had worked for a very talented and highly respected headteacher from whom he learned a great deal. Also, an experienced headteacher (and friend) gave **Headteacher 2** good support during his early days as a new headteacher. **Headteacher 2** is appalled by the lack of preparation for new headteachers within Chesley, particularly nowadays with the added pressure.

**Headteacher 2's** advice to someone about to begin their first headship in Chesley would be to get in touch with an experienced head and be 'adopted'. (A system that **Headteacher 2** feels should exist for the benefit of all new headteachers. In fact such a system is now in operation throughout Chesley.) He felt that there was perhaps a danger of giving too much advice to a new head:

'... .. but in general terms, I think that I would say to somebody that first of all when you go into a school, unless it's a perfect school or something, if it's a school that you feel has a long way to go then one thing is that you've got to sort of pace yourself. You've got to sort of look in terms of five years.'



**Headteacher 2** advises a new headteacher to watch and listen during the first term and perhaps not do very much.

Naming difficulties and dissatisfactions of the job.

The difficulties and dissatisfactions upmost in **Headteacher 2's** mind were largely to do with political and financial issues related to the proposed abolition of the local education authority and cuts in the government's financial support for the Borough of Chesley and the local education authority. **Headteacher 2** felt that support staff and teachers were demoralised in the present climate and the poor building that they worked in was seen as a further source of difficulty.

Within the day-to-day running of the school **Headteacher 2's** dissatisfaction was with all the pressures that schools have been put under of late (eg. anti-racist and anti-sexist policies, R.E. in schools - much of which he supported) making, in his opinion, the job of headteacher 'a totally thankless and difficult job'.

'One of the problems of the job is that primary education has become very sophisticated. And I think the ultimate, you know, what might be considered as being a very good primary school, junior school, infant school, is very hard to achieve. Particularly in an inner city setting with all the stresses.

I think that we're terribly undervalued, we're badly paid, we've got low status and so on, and I just don't think you're ever going to get the quality of people in large numbers, that will be necessary to have a first rate system of this kind of sophistication given the sort of present pay and conditions and so on. What you tend to have is the odd, you know, special person who is very successful who, you know, sets the standard.

What really depresses me is that things totally outside my control, you know great political movements like the present government's sort of hatred of (the Authority) and all that sort of thing, great forces way beyond little me are now determining my job. And that I find, you know,

horrendous.

And I think ultimately, if those forces make the job, in my terms, impossible - that's when I'd sort of have to get out. 'Cos, you know, there's no way I could sit back and watch six years of hard work just go down the tubes. I'd rather sweep the streets really. It would be just too depressing for words.'

Stress is seen by **Headteacher 2** to be part of the job

'I'm convinced that if I was 55 I'd be quite worried about my health. The rate I move at school, I don't think I could do it. I'd either have to slow down a lot and see the school slow down around me. Or I don't know. ... I mean, I have absolutely no intention of being a head, particularly in an inner city area, for many more years. You know, I'm feeling fairly jaded by the whole thing. And I'm a person, I think I've got a fair amount of enthusiasm.'

The teacher shortage was affecting the running of the school in that they were one teacher short - the children were at home, not having been able to start in the infant reception class - and a class was being taught by a temporary teacher.

Industrial action by the teachers was affecting the job in that classes were being sent home if a teacher was away for more than one day and there was no supply teacher available to cover absence. **Headteacher 2** found it very painful to have to exclude children from school. However, relationships within Oldfield were felt to be good.

When asked which one thing he would like to have changed about his job **Headteacher 2** said that had the question been put to him two years ago he would have said finding a way of being able to recruit quality staff and finding a way of dealing with really, dreadfully incompetent staff. However, at the present time **Headteacher 2** felt that he was 'obsessed' about the quality of teachers due to the present shortage.

Naming satisfactions and enjoyable aspects of the job.

For **Headteacher 2** a source of satisfaction in the past had been the good resources of the local education authority (particularly staff/pupil ratios and capitation) and working with an exceptional primary inspector who had been an inspiration and was now no longer with the authority. Currently much was felt to be over-shadowed by the difficulties and dissatisfactions named above, yet **Headteacher 2** felt satisfaction and optimism about his job and about seeing the school improve. He finds it exciting working with the newly qualified and enthusiastic teachers on his staff, ie. those in the first two or three years of their teaching career: **Headteacher 2** sees this as having to do with attitude rather than age of teachers.

Particular priorities, aims or philosophy.

His priorities, aims and philosophy have changed during **Headteacher 2's** time at Oldfield in that the needs of the school have changed during its development from a 'sink' school with serious problems to a school which the inspectorate see as successful.

Reading standards are a current priority, particularly picking up on children's needs early on in their time at school.

At the basis of **Headteacher 2's** basic philosophy is the ethos of the school - the children being valued, relationships within the school, mutual respect and fairness:

'The majority of the kids in the school come from a tough environment and outside the school they have to fend for themselves. And they get up to some, at times they behave very badly. But in school we tend to have a sort of, a feeling, a community feeling, and the kids have a lot of freedom and they tend, in general, not to abuse it. And I find that fascinating really. I love it.

So I give them a tremendous amount of responsibility. And as I've been in the job longer, when there are lapses, when kids let us down and things go wrong, I tend to sort of, I don't get upset about it because I see it in a much wider context and I sort of can see why it's happening. And I'm quite optimistic in that sense. You know, about the school anyway.

So what tends to happen with this philosophy it's a slow, gradual process and as the years have gone by the kids have become, you know, very positive about the school, very positive about their learning. I mean if they go off to the library to do something or they're out in the corridor working on their own, in the main they tend not to muck about. ... There's been a tremendous change in the whole way the school operates. But what I want to see now is that taken a stage further. Because I think that we have far too low an expectation of the kids. We don't demand enough.'

### Style or approach to the job of headship.

**Headteacher 2** feels that he has a particular style of headship - largely stemming from his being 'a fairly big personality in the school'. (He is 6ft. 5ins. tall!) He sums up this style, or approach, by citing his open door policy with the children, his honesty and frankness with them about all aspects of the running of the school and their learning, and the ways in which he involves them at a personal level. With colleagues **Headteacher 2** tries to be as supportive as possible, though he is not hesitant about being firm if this is called for.

### Essentials of the job.

Primary school headship is seen by **Headteacher 2** as being a different thing in different settings. For headship in Chesley **Headteacher 2** stressed that you have to be a strong character:

'Unless you can, sort of, make your mark on the school and the parents and kids can have a certain amount of confidence in you, that you can run the show and deal with things, then it's going to be, you know, it's not going to work out very well.'

The job is seen by **Headteacher 2** as unique in that it is a job that is only suited to certain people: you've got to be sensitive, but also tough. For example, **Headteacher 2** has had to deal with industrial action, threats of physical abuse from parents, death threats from parents, and parents whose views clash - sometimes very strongly - with the aims and culture of the school (eg. teaching anti-racism and anti-sexism).

Management and leadership are seen by **Headteacher 2** as appropriate to the job. However, he feels that ultimately success in these is to do with personal strengths, which training may help with.

### Effect of the job on private life.

**Headteacher 2** sees the job as affecting his private life; it intrudes and dominates the whole week. He feels that he is able to switch off at weekends and almost totally in the holidays.

'Im usually switched off by about 11 o'clock on Saturday morning and I don't start switching on again until about 6 o'clock on Sunday evening.'

**Headteacher 2** finds it quite difficult to discipline himself to do school work at weekends.

Not getting minor things done makes **Headteacher 2** fed-up and frustrated, but he is only seriously depressed over relationship-related issues. He feels that one of the nice things about the job after six years' experience is that going into work to face fairly major issues does not seem to bother him at all, whereas 'I know you go to work the first couple of years of headship feeling slightly physically sick'.

### Overall feeling about the job.

**Headteacher 2** feels satisfaction and optimism about the development of the school and the changes in staff.

His headship is something that he feels he could not repeat:

'I just haven't got it in me to do it again and that's why I'm not looking for a second headship at the moment.'

**Headteacher 2** feels successful, but disappointed that he hasn't been more successful. His greatest achievement is seen as having had a hand in changing a very unhappy school into a school that is happy and where children enjoy coming. Though it is a far better school than it was, **Headteacher 2** feels that it could be so much better. He would appreciate a sound objective opinion,

perhaps from an H.M.I., in order to put this worry into perspective.

Implications of the researcher also being a fellow headteacher and feeling about the interview.

**Headteacher 2** felt happy about the interview and 'enjoyed it immensely':

'It's been a very satisfying experience because the questioning has come from, you know, a position of, you know, knowledge and empathy and so on. I'd have found it frustrating answering the questions posed by somebody who didn't have a full knowledge of the job.'

Headteacher 3 - reflective account of primary school headship experience at Pottersview Primary School.

**Headteacher 3** began her written description of her job as headteacher of Pottersview by listing three 'original ideals'. Firstly, **Headteacher 3** saw the school as 'a vital spoke in the community wheel with staff and able parents sharing skills and talents in a workshop atmosphere'.

Secondly, through her job **Headteacher 3** hoped to repudiate the idea that children's standards of achievement at Pottersview must be low because of 'background influence' - ie. the children being working class. (See **Headteacher 3**'s description of the school's pupil intake in Chapter 3.)

Thirdly, **Headteacher 3**

'saw the opportunity for filling the school with people with special talents - art, music, dance, drama, so that the children could receive enriching experiences - sounds rather grand but I did believe this - sorely disappointed - would still like to achieve it.'

These ideals were seen as a necessary philosophy on which to base her approach to the job.

**Headteacher 3** felt that in reality her original ideals had to be shelved because of the unusually high turn-over rate of non-English speaking families (50% in 1981) which put stresses on the school and the host community - 'all energies had to be diverted to survival skills from all members of staff'.

Under the heading 'What happens next or Where I am' **Headteacher 3** stated the following:

'A recent slowing down of the turn-over rate has enabled some of the original ideas to surface.

- a) a general look at standards of achievement has begun
- b) a more positive move towards parental involvement has started - very, very slow this.
- c) still trying to bring in extra talent in the arts
- d) I am learning to delegate. This has been difficult for me as I felt earlier on that the unusual nature of the school placed undue stresses on staff so I did it all. Ill health has made me wiser
- e) In order to achieve more delegation I have implemented more staff training - of course this is dependant on the industrial situation
- f) I have now to re-examine the nature of management in order that the school moves forward. This I can see will be painful. It would be interesting to see how I come out of it.'

#### The task of describing the job.

**Headteacher 3** found writing a description of her job as headteacher of Pottersview an extremely difficult and salutary task. Much of the difficulty was felt to do with the changing nature of the job (ie. during her six years of headship) and also never having had the opportunity, or never having made the opportunity, to really study her role as headteacher of Pottersview.

Asked why she headed her written description 'General Dogsbody', **Headteacher 3** cited the range of tasks her job involved - 'sweeping up the floor, cleaning the sick



and then sitting in the hot chair for parents and governors'.

In trying to analyse why she ended up doing such a wide range of basic tasks, **Headteacher 3** thought that perhaps her lack of skill in giving instructions to get unpleasant jobs done, her need to get things done quickly and her anxiety to maintain a pleasant school atmosphere were to blame.

Is the job enormous, vague and never completed?

**Headteacher 3** agreed that the job is enormous, vague and never completed:

'I think I have to agree because to some extent I can't truthfully say that I've enjoyed the job. and that worries me. ... ..

I feel (the job) has de-skilled me, I think. I think I was a very good class teacher. And, you know, I worked within a situation where you could see what you were doing, where it was going.

The enormity of headship, the role of headship, you don't see it and a very few people are there to tell you that you are doing something positive or good. And, you know, unless you have that inner strength to constantly say that to yourself, the vagueness or the enormity of it becomes very important.'

When asked why she thought things weren't completed **Headteacher 3** gave a two-fold explanation. Firstly the results of constant research and new initiatives in education at local and national levels generate new ideas and new tasks and often schools don't have the opportunity to develop any one particular idea before others demanded attention. **Headteacher 3** sees this as a feeling of being on 'a treadmill that is going nowhere', though there are positive consequences that challenge headteachers to change themselves. Secondly, the day-to-day running of the school, the volume of work, is seen as going on and on, and never being finished.

The main consideration for headship of Pottersview is having to take into account the particular circumstances of the school, namely the very high number of mobile non-English speaking families (housed in 32 nearby bed and breakfast hotels):

'To keep a balance between the situation that's there with the hotels and the host community that's there with their children'

has been the dominant role of the school and **Headteacher 3** for five years.

#### Preparation for primary school headship.

**Headteacher 3's** early experience at Pottersview was 'a bath of hell really, hell-fire', and she lost four stones within two months. It was an unusual first headship experience created by the very high number of mobile non-English speaking families. For example, daily 10 or 12 families, each with five or six children and no English, were admitted by **Headteacher 3** and their needs dominated the overall functioning of the school.

**Headteacher 3** had very limited preparation for headship because, she feels, she did not have any insights as to 'what happened in the head's office'. (She was acting Deputy Head for one term.) Support came from a neighbouring headteacher by way of telephone calls, and later, the Divisional Education Officer gave her good support. Nothing she had done previously prepared **Headteacher 3** for her job at Pottersview.

Preparation for headship is seen by **Headteacher 3** as having:

- 1) Experience that helps to 'identify the task in hand, and establish priorities'.
- 2) The ability 'to see how the task in hand is dependant on the team there to do it and relationships within the team'.
- 3) Skills in communicating with a wide range of people.

Advice to someone about to begin their headship in Chesley is:

'try to establish a pretty good working relationship with the staff and let them feel that you value what they are doing. And get them on the inside from the beginning to look at things. Because once you get that, I think it is easier then, than to start off in one way and then have to work back.'

Outside interests are seen as necessary because the job can become all-important in your life, which is not good. The ability to admit that you cannot do something, and to be able to talk about it, particularly to other headteachers, is seen as important.

#### Naming difficulties and dissatisfactions of the job.

The main dissatisfaction to **Headteacher 3** is to do with children's learning, or rather lack of it: as headteacher she has the responsibility for children's learning, but she feels that she has little authority or power to eliminate bad practice (eg. poor teachers) that may be harming children's learning and the school's working atmosphere.

**Headteacher 3** feels that personnel beyond the school who send directives do not seem to know how schools actually operate, particularly they do not understand that the headteacher's job is much more than administration.

The limited amount that she can do about the growing pressures that parents are facing (eg. poor home conditions), which impinge on the child at school and the whole atmosphere at school, make **Headteacher 3** unhappy.

Some stress is seen by **Headteacher 3** as inevitable and some she feels is self-inflicted. She cited different kinds of stress - eg. that generated by the current times in which we live - and feels that the overall amount is worrying.

The teacher shortage was affecting her job, namely not having supply teachers to cover absent teachers, which meant that **Headteacher 3** had to do cover rather than her proper work.

Teachers' industrial action had meant that some aspects of the school's development (particularly curriculum development initiatives) have been damaged because of there being no staff meetings. Relationships within the school had been affected by industrial action, and **Headteacher 3** has come to accept that there is very little that she can do other than go along with such action. For example, when industrial action first began **Headteacher 3** felt that she could not exclude children from school when there was no supply teacher (in view of the particular catchment area) and this created tension between herself and the staff. This tension made her ill and affected her life outside school. Eventually, however, she had to go along with excluding children, and it was hard work maintaining a good relationship with parents. The main difficulty was in marrying her sympathy with the teachers' cause and her role and responsibilities as headteacher; this difficulty caused her much unhappiness and stress. At the time of the interview relationships within the school were seen by **Headteacher 3** as being very good.

If **Headteacher 3** could change one thing about the job it would be to get rid of the administration within the school that has nothing directly to do with children's learning, the curriculum and the staff.

### Naming satisfactions and enjoyable aspects of the job.

Without any doubt the most satisfying and enjoyable aspect of the job for **Headteacher 3** is being in a classroom, teaching, even though it at times creates problems when this has to be done without planning.

**Headteacher 3** named the informal chats with the staff as another enjoyable aspect of the job; sharing the personal achievements and good developments within the school that may not come to light in a more formal meeting.

'Anything to do with the children I find immediately satisfying. And that makes me come here every day, nothing else.'

### Particular priorities, aims or philosophy.

When asked about priorities, aims and philosophy **Headteacher 3** stated that she would like to be a better headteacher. She would appreciate any in-put that would help achieve this - broadening her experiences and perceptions - which she sees as being for the benefit of the school:

'I would still like that original philosophy I have of a primary school to be the one that is there (ie. above). Where it is a place of learning which is challenging. I don't think one should be afraid of challenges and competition in that sense. It's challenging, it's rewarding. And, you know, people want to work in that place and you can see that you are contributing something to the quality of the life of the children. ... It is quite a thing where parents hand over their children to you and leave them with you so many hours of the day, because they have the confidence that you are going to care for those children, in, you know, all the levels that are there. And that I think is a responsibility that we sometimes tend to forget. It tends to disappear in the great scheme of things. But I would still like to be able to see parents coming in if they can, sharing the skills that they have and the community, I'd like to see that.'

**Headteacher 3** saw much of her philosophy as being part of her as a person:

'It's not very often at the forefront of my thoughts because I just am there dealing with, while I'm reacting really, to, which is very worrying. Because you react to situations and if, I think, the head, the role takes on a major part where I as an individual am only reacting we're not getting anywhere because you need the other side of that. I think it (ie. the philosophy) does get shelved. But I think one aspect of it in the last year, this year, we've been able to put into operation and that could be a way in to having at least part of that philosophy filtering through the school.'

**Headteacher 3** sees her philosophy as having grown out of her teaching experience, particularly having worked with very able children whom she felt were not achieving their rightful position in society because of their background:

'I think to be honest the people who have been supportive, in a strange way, in this job is the children.

Because I've gained from, and enjoyed, sharing their excitement and so on. And even when I'm cross with them, which one has to be, I still think I enjoy that sort of interaction and I find I get some support. It's very difficult in some ways to itemise or to list. But I must get some strength from that and that's where that original aspect of my own philosophy is there.'

#### Style of approach to headship.

**Headteacher 3** was not able to identify her particular style of or approach to headship, though she felt she did have one, or had a blend of several. She felt that she went by her own personality, having to make adjustments in the light of experience; being aware of people's strengths, trying to be honest and open with staff, and sharing whenever possible. 'I'm not charismatic, I'm not flamboyant, I'm not a high flyer.'

In her written response (see above) **Headteacher 3** wrote:

'I have now to re-examine the nature of management in order that the school moves forward. This I can see will be painful.'

When asked to enlarge on this statement **Headteacher 3** explained that the difficult and painful aspect of management to be conquered was:

"delegating and having confidence, it's not so much delegating, but having confidence that it's going to be done. Or even if it isn't done as how I would like it to be able to accept that and work on that in a positive way. I think it's important for the school because the teachers themselves need to develop and I think if they can the children will benefit from that. And I have got to look at that aspect of management in me. I know sometimes being aware of a problem is sometimes three-quarters of the way to solving it. But I need to do something about that."

#### Essentials of the job.

**Headteacher 3** sees the job essentially as:

- 1) 'It's about relationships'.
- 2) 'It's about the task in hand - the ability to identify and to prioritise'.
- 3) People need to know what is expected of them and help given so that they can achieve this.
- 4) The ability to relate - the head having to relate on so many different levels
- 5) Knowledge - being up to date without worrying about knowing every development in primary education and headship.

Management and leadership are seen as appropriate to industry by **Headteacher 3** because she feels those concerns have very clear-cut aims as to where they are going and teaching and education have not. Primary school education is seen as being permeated by and dependant on human relationships which make it difficult to apply the terms management and leadership.

### Effect of the job on private life.

**Headteacher 3** sees her private life as having been seriously eroded by the job. This, she claims, is due to her inability not to take work home; much work that could, or should, be done in school is left in order to give priority to seeing to people's needs. She feels that she still has to learn how to balance her personal needs against those of headship.

**Headteacher 3** sees teaching as a unique job, and she was not sure whether headship is unique, except in that children are involved.

### Overall feeling about the job.

**Headteacher 3** felt that from time to time she needed to remind herself of the positive things that she has achieved at Pottersview. The school had several ingredients that could have led to an 'explosive situation' and these have been overcome in the light of the school's development.

The resourcing of the school is seen by **Headteacher 3** as her main achievement.

**Headteacher 3** more often feels that she is not successful in her job because 'it's very difficult to stand outside what's happening and look at it objectively'. Inspectors and other people lead **Headteacher 3** to believe that she is working successfully at Pottersview.

The standards of achievement in learning for some of the children are not as good as they should be in **Headteacher 3's** opinion, and although there are reasons to explain this, it still worries her.



Implications of the researcher also being a fellow -  
headteacher feeling about the interview

**Headteacher 3** felt that the interview being carried out by a fellow headteacher had a positive value in that 'one is talking to someone who is going through in some ways a similar experience' and that has an 'almost subconscious influence there and is necessary'.

**Headteacher 3** felt satisfied with the interview and said she would benefit from listening to the audio-tape herself and would like a copy.

Headteacher 4 - reflective account of primary school  
headship experience at Deanway Primary School.

**Headteacher 4** wrote a detailed four-page description of her job as headteacher of Deanway Primary School. The description begins with a list of tasks to be accomplished and the various people and organisations involved - all of which suggests a wide variety of tasks and a large workload.

However, much of **Headteacher 4's** document is taken up with a perception of the job that could be described as **Headteacher 4's** view of her functioning as the particular person that she sees herself as being. For example:

'I'm a great one for doing things my way - if I'm the one who has to do it that is - I'm reasonably tolerant about how they (the teachers) do it!

Oddly enough the authority's demands don't seem to bother me as much as they do a lot of colleagues - perhaps I have a more strongly developed anarchic streak.'

**Headteacher 4's** written description is a personal document and her perception of the job does not have a clearly definable framework; much of the information in the document is presented at the relevant points in this reflective account (below).

### The task of describing the job.

**Headteacher 4** found the task of writing a description of her job extremely difficult and did not know where to start because the job, from her point of view, is not clearly defined:

'There are things that I know I ought to do that are part of my responsibilities. There are lots of things which it never occurred to me that I would have to do. There are an awful lot of things which I don't see as part of the job but they land on me by default as it were. People keep coming up with all sorts of unexpected things. I never know what any day is going to be like. And that's not because I don't plan things, I'm actually quite a well organised person.'

A further difficulty in writing a job description cited by **Headteacher 4** was the fact that she did so much on 'automatic pilot' without being particularly aware of the task she was doing. **Headteacher 4** felt that the writing of any job description might well be influenced by what was currently happening in her job and what was uppermost in her mind at the time of writing.

### What the main headings might be in writing a job description.

The main headings in writing a job description are seen by **Headteacher 4** as:

Involvement with children. (in the broadest sense)  
Involvement with parents.  
Consultation with staff.  
Trying to make everyone feel valued - building the ethos of the school.  
Being the spokesperson for the school - liaising with the local education authority and other agencies .  
The development of the curriculum in consultation with the staff.  
The encouragement and maintaining of high standards; and  
The appointment of staff

Is the job enormous, vague and never completed?

**Headteacher 4** agreed that the job is enormous, vague and never completed - which is partly due to the job being so ill-defined - but stressed that this is not necessarily a negative thing. The situation is seen as giving individual schools the opportunity to make their own priorities and achieve the satisfaction of meeting these priorities in their own way and in their own time.

**Headteacher 4** sees the job as never being completed and is happy with this conception. She does not think that the job should ever be considered completed, since education is seen as a developmental process, staff and curriculum development are broad and on-going, being constantly evaluated and improved and new members of staff being integrated into the school.

Preparation for primary school headship.

Having worked for a 'good' headteacher for the first four years of her seven years of deputy headship, **Headteacher 4** felt that she was well prepared for headship. During the four years **Headteacher 4** had been involved in all aspects of the running of the school, her contribution had been very much valued and she was acting head for two terms when the headteacher in question left. **Headteacher 4** feels that being an acting head is very much doing a 'holding' job and very different from headship proper - yet it was a useful preparation.

On taking up her post at Deanway, **Headteacher 4** found it valuable when she was invited to meet personnel at the Divisional Education Office. However, there was no further official support since the inspector was under pressure elsewhere. Support for **Headteacher 4** came from fellow headteachers and the headteacher for whom she worked as deputy for four years.

On first being appointed to headship **Headteacher 4** found it difficult, and sometimes still does, to be seen as 'the head' and not as herself. She had, and still has, great difficulty in taking herself seriously in the role of headteacher as it was expected of her by her colleagues. She wrote:

'I find it so difficult to be perceived as 'the head' instead of as (name). I think I am 'myself' (whoever that is) with them all and they find it rather perplexing. I think they find my sense of humour a bit weird sometimes but I can't cope with unreal formality. Probably my tendency to send myself up, as well as most other things, gets me through it.'

**Headteacher 4** did not know what advice to give a new headteacher.

Naming difficulties or dissatisfactions of the job.

In her written description of her job, **Headteacher 4** wrote:

'I think probably what I find most difficult of all about my job is that it's so LONELY. Nobody there has any idea of what it's like to be me. They seem to expect perfection - it's okay for them to be fallible but they can only see things from one perspective. I find it irritating when they don't realise that I'm having to respond to the demands and needs of at least 20 people (excluding parents and children) every day and can't always do what they want immediately.'

When asked to enlarge on this, **Headteacher 4** said that she felt that some colleagues imagined the headteacher sat in the office doing little, and that they had no idea of the various people constantly making demands on the headteacher's time.

What **Headteacher 4** sees as the 'pettiness' of the job 'irks' her very much:

'I have found over the last year that there is an awful lot of irksome stuff that, really, I shouldn't ... I resent spending my time. ... A child being sent to me for having broken a pencil; albeit deliberately. Petty squabbles being brought to me. People wanting to know whether it's 'wet play' or not. I feel, you know, they are the people who are going to have to be out there, they make the decision. Do they want me to wipe their noses for them?'

A further quotation from **Headteacher 4's** written document reveals some other dissatisfactions:

'I do get frustrated at the low standards and angry when people blame it on the children and their backgrounds. I find the unwillingness to own the problem very hard to take. I feel that by improving our own organisation, making our expectations explicit, aiming high and providing a rich and varied curriculum we could do a lot to raise the standards. Boring children is a cardinal sin for me.'

To **Headteacher 4** the fragmented nature of the job and the fact that colleagues are only available for short periods during the day (because they are teaching) means that sometimes there isn't enough to do - or rather **Headteacher 4** feels that she is not always able to get on with things at the time she would like to do them.

**Headteacher 4** feels that 'there are lots of times when it (the job) gets very, very stressful'. A source of stress and dissatisfaction in the job cited by **Headteacher 4** is the lack of supply teachers to cover absent colleagues. (In the three years that **Headteacher 4** has been at Deanway there has been one week when the full staff were present.) Even while teaching to cover for an absent colleague, **Headteacher 4** feels that she is more or less expected to carry out her headship as well.

At the time of the interview industrial action by the teachers' unions was affecting the school in the following ways:

Dinner duty was being covered by Helpers, with the Headteacher on call. The effect of this was a deterioration in the children's behaviour.

Children were having to be excluded when there was no cover for an absent colleague.

Staff meetings were being held four times in the term by having the children start school at 10.00 am.

There were no meetings with parents.

**Headteacher 4** supported the teachers' action and she felt that good relationships had been maintained.

If **Headteacher 4** could change one thing about the job she would like:

'I'd like a greater sense of responsibility ... on the part of other people. I'd like people to be more willing to take things on, to see it as part of their job. I'd like people to be perhaps a bit more independent of me than they are ... and I think

that's partly to do with my own personality.'

Naming satisfactions and enjoyable aspects of the job.

For **Headteacher 4** the greatest joy is just the children; she enjoys being with the children and has a number of strategies to promote her regular involvement with them.

**Headteacher 4** enjoys the variety of not knowing quite how each day is going to be, and she likes what she describes of the challenge of a 'tough' school in a 'difficult' area. In her written document **Headteacher 4** stated:

'I feel tremendously satisfied when presented with horrendous situations and I love to think fast and sort something out (after I've done it, of course!).'

Helping staff to develop professionally and grow in confidence is an aspect of the job that **Headteacher 4** particularly enjoys. Being able to go out of school (to meetings, etc.) is quite important to **Headteacher 4**.

Particular priorities, aims or philosophy.

**Headteacher 4's** chief priority is to improve the standard of the education for the children of Deanway; she strongly 'loathes' the idea that the background of the children limits their educational potential.

Other main priorities are:

that the school is a welcoming place, a place where teachers and children respect each other and care about the environment of the school;

that the children enjoy coming to school;

that the school is a lively and stimulating environment for children;

that the staff are happy working together - particularly in such a poorly designed building; and to help staff with their professional development.

#### Style or approach to headship.

Asked whether she had a particular style of headship, **Headteacher 4** said that she tried to be democratic and is concerned with consultation, though in the past staff had interpreted her idea of consultation as her doing what they wanted. The fact that it is the staff who often have to implement new ideas and changes in practice is a good reason for **Headteacher 4** to sometimes go along with what staff want although she may not be committed to the particular idea.

#### Essentials of the job.

The essentials of primary headship, as she experiences it, are seen by **Headteacher 4** as:

- organisation and development of the curriculum;
- development of staff;
- looking after the non-teaching staff and seeing them as part of the whole enterprise;
- lots of involvement with parents and children;
- being available to people;
- the need of a tremendous amount of stamina;
- the ability to 'be in several places at once';
- and
- optimism and the ability to 'keep a clear head'.

**Headteacher 4** doesn't see any particular style or personality as being important; she sees the job as being done in different ways by different people. She feels that it helps to be articulate and be able to present your case. It also helps not to be in fear of authority.



**Headteacher 4** feels that, nowadays, people must be very professional since teaching has, in her opinion, become a much more professional job over the past ten years.

**Headteacher 4** could not equate primary school headship with any other job. She sees the job as bizarre and 'very strange' in that her friends in management positions have much more structured and more coherent jobs.

The terms management and leadership are seen by **Headteacher 4** as appropriate to the job, but are 'by no means the whole thing'. The experience of being a teacher, and being good at teaching, are felt to be essential, plus the job requires you to be many things such as a social worker, a befriender and sometimes a clown.

#### Effects of the job on private life.

**Headteacher 4** sees the job as affecting her private life - as do other people's jobs.

'I spend so much of my time doing it that it is part of what I am, as much as just something I do. I don't often have sleepless nights over it, though I do sometimes. ... If I have mishandled a situation it does live with me for a bit. If I've had an unfortunate personal contact with one of the staff, that upsets me and I go over and over it and think what could I have done that would have made it different.'

**Headteacher 4** made a decision not to take the job home with her, and works late at school rather than do this. She enjoys working at school during the holidays - it is quiet and she can get on with a range of the more sizeable tasks such as a major stock order.

'I think it's desperately important to have your own life outside. I think that my other activities make me a more interesting person.'

How **Headteacher 4** feels at the end of the day varies

considerably.

Overall feeling about the job.

**Headteacher 4** likes her job and finds it fun and challenging. However, she feels that she now needs something new and a fresh challenge. She feels that she is successful in her job, though there are times when she feels that she is not.

**Headteacher 4** cites two areas of particular achievement in her time at Deanway:

- 1) the building of a team of staff who work well together, and
- 2) the school being well on the way to improving the standards of children's learning because staff are more critical of what they are doing. She sees the school as a much more ordered, friendly, welcoming place, with children taking a much greater pride in their achievements.

When asked what worried her because it was not being achieved, **Headteacher 4** cited a particular postholder; despite a lot of support and encouragement **Headteacher 4** cannot get this person to do the job.

Implications of the researcher being a fellow headteacher and feeling about the interview.

**Headteacher 4** felt that the interview had been made easier for her by her talking to someone who 'knows what it's like'.

'It is tremendously therapeutic to be able to talk about the job. It's made me think about it quite hard - what I actually do with my time. But it's so nice to be able to talk about it, because nobody ever asks you how you feel.'

**Headteacher 4** enjoyed the interview. She felt that a researcher who was not a practitioner might find it difficult to comprehend some aspects of the job, but did not

know whether it was an advantage or a disadvantage that the research was being carried out by a fellow headteacher.

Findings from responses to the second open-ended question.

The four headteachers' written responses to the second open-ended question - concerned with what they might wish to achieve from their involvement in the investigation (see above) - implicitly and explicitly reveal that they perceive their job as being ambiguous. Consequently, three of the headteachers state their need for reflection and discussion as to the nature of the job, and **Headteacher 4** pointed out how alone she felt in the job.

Findings from the headteachers' written descriptions of their job and related comments from the interviews.

The job description documents produced in response to the first open-ended question in the questionnaire vary in size, style of writing and in how the four headteachers perceive a description of their job.

**Headteacher 1's** relatively short (140 words) statement does not describe the content of his job (or the skills, personal qualities, etc. that may be involved) beyond saying 'the job is enormous, vague and never completed', his citing the difficulty in amalgamating two schools, and that his style is to do with juggling long-term and short-term aims. The notion of juggling, as used in the job description and substantiated by interview data, clearly implies that the job involves prioritising. In the interview, **Headteacher 1** stated that 'to do the job skilfully you have to be juggling', and Haigh (1981) likened being a headteacher to the task of a plate juggler:

'To give one micro-second of extra attention to any single plate is to invite a chain reaction of disaster which bids fair to culminate in an avalanche of broken crockery.

Thus it is for the head - or perhaps, indeed, for any manager, who, if he spends too much time sorting out one problem may well find that others are growing to horrendous proportions behind his back.'

(School Organisation 1981, Vol 1, No. 2)

The four pages describing 'a day at school' attached to **Headteacher 1's** job description contain information similar to that which appears in the diary. (See further discussion of **Headteacher 1's** job description in Chapter 7.)

**Headteacher 2's** written description of the content of his job is reproduced in the reflective account above. It perceives the job in terms of tasks to be accomplished, which are categorised into:

- 1) Day-to-day running of the school.
- 2) Medium-term commitments.
- 3) Long-term commitments and goals.

**Headteacher 3's** written description of her job does not give specific details as to the content, in the way that **Headteacher 2's** document does. Rather, it is a much more personal document carrying an explicit philosophy and aims and the personal 'story' of how these have permeated the development of **Headteacher 3's** job at Pottersview. The 'story' is presented under the following headings:

Original ideas; Actuality; Achievements!! or the job has evolved; Staff; What happens next or where I am.

Much of the details of **Headteacher 3's** written job description is reproduced in the reflective account above. (See further discussion in Chapter Seven.)

**Headteacher 4's** written description of her job is, like that of **Headteacher 3**, a personal account, only more so. And like **Headteacher 2's** description, **Headteacher 4's** document lists a wide range of tasks and personnel as being pertinent to her everyday work. (See further discussion in Chapter Seven.)

**Headteacher 3** and **Headteacher 4** found the task of writing a description of their job extremely difficult, and **Headteacher 1** found it difficult in so far as 'knowing where to start and how to prioritise things'. **Headteacher 2** said that he found the task easy, since he had given some thought to the nature of his job prior to receiving the questionnaire.

The chief source of difficulty in writing a description of their job was cited by the three headteachers as its ambiguous and complex nature, and the volume of work involved. **Headteacher 3** and **Headteacher 4** agreed with **Headteacher 1** that the job is certainly enormous, vague and never completed. **Headteacher 2** agreed that the job is certainly enormous and never completed but was not sure whether it is vague. **Headteacher 2's** view that the job is essentially about defining priorities in a vague and ill-defined situation (see quotation from **Headteacher 2's** interview, above) is shared by the other headteachers.

From the written job descriptions and the interview data the job is perceived by the four headteachers as being relatively ambiguous (and this is supported by Bell, 1988); enormous; very much concerned with prioritising, and it often involves having to respond to unplanned demands - which gives the job a 'reactive' aspect.

The four job descriptions are examined in greater detail - from the point of view of their being in the form of written discourse - in Chapter Seven.

### Summary and conclusions.

The four headteachers' job descriptions and what they said in the interview do not relate their perceptions of their job directly to any particular model of primary school headship or any conventional management perspective.

There may be good explanatory reasons for agreement and disagreement across the four headteachers' perceptions as collected from the job descriptions and diary data, which are discussed below. However, since the present Chapter, and indeed the entire investigation, is concerned with presenting an exploratory, close-up picture of the individual headteacher's views, explanations and responses to his or her job, speculation on what might be explanatory factors for agreement or disagreement is beyond the purpose of the task in hand. For example, when asked whether the job affected their private lives (see below) the four headteachers gave different responses ranging from stating that the job seriously eroded her private life (**Headteacher 3**) to seeing it as only rarely affecting his private life (**Headteacher 1**). Explanatory factors to explain the disagreement across the four headteachers could, for example, be to do with:

- 1) the demands, or lack of demands, on a headteacher's private time because of family commitments at home;
- 2) factors directly related to the character and functioning of a particular school (eg. notions of difficulty of pupil intake and/or a relatively high number of children with special educational needs - support, or lack of support, from parents, governors and local inspector - quality of staff); or
- 3) an individual headteacher's interpretation of his or her job.

When asked whether they had a particular style or approach to headship none of the four headteachers articulated a specific style or approach. From what the four headteachers said in reply to the specific questions, and from other aspects of the interview, headship in

practice appears to be implicitly perceived as something complex and fluid and largely generated from the personality and need-disposition of the individual headteacher and the ways in which he or she interprets and creates the job through reflective social interaction with the demands and opportunities specific to his or her particular school.

The essentials of the job were perceived by the four headteachers in individual ways, using a variety of terms to do with skills, knowledge, tasks and personal qualities, except in the case of **Headteacher 2** who expressed the essentials in terms of an overarching statement about clarity and firmness of purpose and having to be 'a strong character' (see quotation above).

The headteachers' perceptions of the essentials of the job are listed in the four reflective accounts (above) and it would distort data if these were reduced beyond the following observations in an attempt to ascertain agreement and dissimilarity across the four headteachers.

The following are crude categories, and there was full or partial agreement with the first overall category by the three headteachers named - otherwise the headteachers named agreed fully with the category named.

An expertise and knowledge of curriculum development, classroom practice and developments in primary education: **Headteachers 1, 3 & 4**

Skills in interpersonal relationships and communication: **Headteachers 1, 3 & 4**

Being able to prioritise: **Headteachers 1, 2 & 3**

The need of a lot of personal energy/stamina: **Headteachers 1 & 4**

The ability to be flexible in responding to unplanned demands: **Headteachers 1 & 4**

Clarity and firmness of purpose and a strong character: **Headteacher 2**

The headteachers' particular priorities, aims and

philosophies were to do with what they saw as the needs of their particular school: for example, the quality of the learning environment as a resource; reading standards; creating a place of learning which is challenging; and improving the standard of the children's education. All four headteachers cited the ethos of the school and the quality of relationships within the school as important priorities.

The terms management and leadership were seen by the four headteachers as appropriate to the job of primary school headship, but, as **Headteacher 4** put it, 'by no means the whole thing'. Each headteacher had his or her own view as to why primary school headship was 'something more' than management:

**Headteacher 1** saw the terms as too vague and if applied would reduce the job 'to the minimum of terms'.

**Headteacher 2** felt that ultimately success in management is to do with personal strengths, which training may help with.

**Headteacher 3** sees primary school education as being permeated by and dependent on human relationships which make it difficult to apply the terms management and leadership.

**Headteacher 4** sees the job as being too broad for the terms to be wholly applicable and that having been a teacher and being good at teaching are essential to the job.

Preparation for their jobs as primary school headteachers was varied and something of a hit-and-miss affair for the headteachers. **Headteachers 2, 3 & 4** attended some of the local education authority's short training courses in primary school management, and all four heads



were invited to meet various personnel within the local education authority's divisional office on their appointment to the job. Both of these were seen as useful. Support from the local education authority's inspectors varied, as the reflective accounts show.

Having worked, as deputy head or otherwise, for a 'good' headteacher was seen by three of the headteachers as the most significant preparation for the job; **Headteacher 3** had only one term's experience as an acting deputy head and felt that she had very limited preparation for her job at Pottersview. Support from fellow headteachers during the early days of being in the job was seen by **Headteachers 2, 3 & 4** as very valuable.

**Headteacher 1** saw being an acting head, or being in charge as deputy head, as being of limited value - as something different from headship - in that one does not have the ultimate long-term responsibility and is largely doing a 'holding job'.

The difficulties and dissatisfactions which all four headteachers mentioned - either in their written documents and/or in the interview - can be related to what the headteachers identified as the ambiguous nature of the job, its enormous workload, the wide range of expectations and demands made upon them and their schools, and their failure to meet all the requirements of the job satisfactorily. This category of difficulty and dissatisfaction with the job emerged in the discussion of the literature in Chapter Two and is explained by Hoyle (1986), page 51 as the organisational pathos of the school:

'There is a pathos inherent in all organisations which arises from the chronic discrepancy between proclaimed organisational goals and their achievement. The incumbent of any leadership role in any organisation is a modern Sisyphus, constantly pushing uphill a backward-rolling boulder in an effort to mobilise people and resources and move them towards an ever-receding peak. To be sure, limited objectives are

constantly being achieved by the organisation as a whole or by particular groups within it. ... ..  
... But when one considers the goals which society attributes to organisations, and especially to the school, and the goals which organisations establish for themselves, the pathos is obvious.'

The ramifications of the industrial action by the teachers' unions and the difficulty of recruiting teachers were cited by all four headteachers as a source of difficulty and dissatisfaction.

The headteachers named some difficulties and dissatisfactions that were particular to them, and these are listed in the reflective accounts. For example: **Headteacher 4** finds the most difficult thing about the job is that it is so lonely; **Headteacher 1** cited the things that took him away from the school's main task of 'the education and progress of the children' as a source of dissatisfaction and **Headteacher 3** agreed with this. **Headteacher 2** gets depressed by political issues that have a negative effect on his job, issues over which he has no power. Similarly, **Headteacher 3** feels that she has little authority or power to eliminate bad practice in the school.

Stress was seen by the four headteachers as an inevitable part of the job. **Headteacher 1** did not find the overall job stressful; **Headteacher 2** felt that he could not maintain his present pace of work if he were older - he would 'have to slow down a lot and see the school slow down'; **Headteacher 3** felt worried about the overall amount of stress in the job; and **Headteacher 4** felt there are times when the job gets 'very, very stressfull'.

When asked if they could change one thing about the job what would it be, the four headteachers gave differing answers:

**Headteacher 1** - to be able to plan with confidence.

**Headteacher 2** - improve the quality of teachers in view of

the current shortage.

**Headteacher 3** - get rid of the administration that has nothing directly to do with children's learning, the curriculum and staff.

**Headteacher 4** - have a greater sense of responsibility, willingness and independence on the part of other people.

In naming the satisfactions and enjoyable aspects of the job **Headteacher 3** and **Headteacher 4** said that this was first and foremost being with the children - in the classroom teaching and other activities that involved working directly with children. **Headteacher 1** said that his chief source of satisfaction was to do with seeing 'the learning develop'. For **Headteacher 2** sources of satisfaction were the good resources provided by the local education authority (particularly staff/pupil ratios and capitation); having worked with an exceptional primary inspector; working with newly qualified and enthusiastic teachers; seeing the school improve.

**Headteacher 1** saw the job as affecting his private life only rarely, whereas the other three headteachers saw it as affecting their private lives, though to varying degrees. **Headteacher 2** stated that 'it intrudes and dominates the week' and **Headteacher 3** felt that her private life has been seriously eroded by the job. **Headteacher 4** saw the job as at times affecting her private life.

Their overall feeling about the job, as expressed by the four headteachers, was one of relative success and satisfaction, but to varying degrees, as the comments in the reflective accounts (above) show.

All four headteachers felt happy about the interview, and the fact that it was with a fellow headteacher had had positive, encouraging, consequences for them.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Diary study: rationale, purpose and procedure.

Consideration of the use of a specially design<sup>d</sup> diary as the investigation's principal research instrument led to consulting Plummer's (1983) text which discusses the use of 'personal documents' (life histories, reports, letters, diaries, photographs, film, etc.) as a distinctive humanistic research style which advocates 'getting close to concrete individual men and women, accurately picking up the way they express their understanding of the world around them, and, perhaps, providing analysis of such expressions. It is a style which constitutes a large underbelly of social science research, but a style which is rarely discussed explicitly' (page 1). The style, which has a strong link with symbolic interactionism, has gone by various names - personal documents, the documentary tradition, life history, oral history and human documents.

Plummer cites Chicago 1920-1935 (roughly) as the hey-day of the use of personal documents as a research style, and explains (page 11) its neglect over recent decades:

'In sum, an important approach to understanding human life has been persistently minimised, maligned and rendered marginal by social scientists: they believe that human documents are just too subjective, too descriptive, too arbitrary to help in scientific advance. They may be right: in which case I would argue that 'scientific advance' isn't the only goal of human endeavour, and life documents with their commitment to humanistic sensitivity still have a vital role to play in human progress. But they may be wrong: scientific advance in the social world may actually be contingent upon building a methodology that can take subjectivity and the lived life as its cornerstone. In which case, documents of life must have a central role to play. But in the end, whether we have social studies or social science, life documents are an immensely valuable and vastly under-rated source.'

The use of the personal documents approach was given a boost by the publication in Chicago in 1918-1920 of W.I. Thomas & Znaniecki's massive research project The Polish Peasant in Europe and America, which was re-issued in 1958. The Polish Peasant was originally issued in five volumes and contained no less than 2,200 pages. The personal documents used in the research project, which was received with great acclaim, fall roughly into five main groups: the use of hundreds of letters; a major life history statement; newspaper materials; documents collected through social agencies; and third person reports from social work agencies and court reports.

In considering the possible range of personal documents, Plummer states that whilst there are a good number of literary diaries, there still remains remarkably little sociological usage of diaries.

Plummer cites three apparent forms of diary used in research: free narrative diary; logs and time budgets; and the diary-diary interview method where the respondent is subsequently interviewed about the content of the diary. Denzin (1978) clarifies three types of diary: the intimate journal, the memoir and the log.

The personal documents referred to by Plummer are generally free from researcher influence in that they are not normally produced with a researcher's needs in mind. The diary used in the present investigation was known to the four respondents to be part of a research project about their jobs, and this has methodological implications which are discussed in Chapter Seven where the diaries are considered as written discourse. The diary used in the present investigation is not of a distinct type as are the kinds of diary named by Plummer and Denzin (above); this also has methodological implications which are discussed in Chapter Seven.

### The design of the diary in relation to its purpose.

The purpose of the diary was to collect four primary school headteacher's subjective descriptions of, and responses to, the activities which constituted their daily workload on five working days between January and June 1987. After a search of the literature it became apparent that the kind of diary format needed for the investigation would have to be specially designed, and this was done in the light of considering the format of diaries used by Rosemary Stewart (1967) to study managers; Webb and Lyons (in Gray, 1982) to study senior personnel in some sixteen large comprehensive schools; and Cartwright, Georgiades and May (1970) in a study of 353 secondary school teachers.

The four completed diaries used in the investigation do not record, nor was it ever considered that they could record, every small activity and social interaction that the four headteachers were involved in during the course of the five days for which they kept the diary. Basically, the diaries aim to describe the range of activities which make up the headteacher's working day, the relative amounts of time the various activities took up, and the headteacher's responses to particular activities.

Thus the diaries demonstrate what the four headteachers regarded as significant and were able to record in their attempts to provide 'full details as to precisely what headteachers do during the course of their working day' (instructional note 1 on page 1 of the diary); a close-up and detailed picture of four particular instances of primary school headship in action, albeit in broad categories.

Mintzberg (1973) states that the diary method has proven a useful tool for the study of managerial work characteristics, but a useless one for the study of work content. Mintzberg gives the reason for this as being the fact that the diary method (as generally carried out) uses a diary which, by its precoded format, determines only time

distribution among known job factors. It is obvious that a precoded diary cannot be designed to categorise the multiplicity of activities which make up a manager's or a headteacher's workload; a precoded diary can only allocate time among known categories. Unreliability is cited by Mintzberg as a shortcoming of diary method which can stem from:

- 1) a respondent's interpretation of the task and wording;
- 2) whether or not a respondent is recording consistently and truthfully; and
- 3) the pace and density of work preventing a respondent recording properly.

Rosemary Stewart (1967) used the diary method to study how 160 managers spent their time during four weeks. These were a varied group of middle and senior managers drawn from a variety of manufacturing companies. The diary used by Stewart was of a precoded format and respondents were asked to tick headings to show how many people were involved in an activity and to indicate the Where?, Who?, How?, and What? of the activity.

The diary method (ie. using a precoded diary) was chosen by Stewart instead of observations because her research aimed to study well over a hundred managers in a large number of different companies and observation would have involved a large team of observers.

Stewart (1967) gives the main advantages of the diary method - that is, using a precoded diary - compared with observations as:

- 1) It is less time-consuming, less expensive and much less restricted in locality.
- 2) It is easier to record the activities for a longer period.
- 3) Classification is made by a person who knows what she/he was doing.

The main advantages of observation compared with diary keeping are given by Stewart (1967) as:

- 1) The observer has time to make more detailed and comprehensive recordings.
- 2) The record is likely to be complete and the observer is much less likely to omit a recording through pressure of work.
- 3) The observer can apply a consistent standard when recording the activities of different people.

In discussing her experiments with different types of diary format Stewart (1967, page 230) came to the conclusion that it is not possible to design a diary of kinds of action:

'The most important conclusion that I reached was that it is impossible to design a diary of kinds of action, along the lines of my second diary, which would yield comparable results. The seminar discussions showed that an individual could be consistent in his classification of kinds of action, and might find it helpful to make such a classification, but that it seemed impossible to produce definitions that would be interpreted in the same way by a number of different individuals. ... This conclusion imposes a very important limitation on the possible scope of analysing managers' jobs by means of diaries, since it means that if one wants comparable results - and that surely must be the aim - one is severely restricted in analysing what the manager does, as distinct from where, how, or with whom he does it.'

The important thing about Stewart's conclusion is that she is speaking in terms of a precoded diary which required respondents to tick given categories. As stated above, a precoded diary cannot be designed to categorise the multiplicity of activities that make up a manager's or a headteacher's workload. Additionally (as Stewart points out above) different respondents, using a precoded diary, would not necessarily interpret the classification of their activities in the same way. These two issues - the restrictive nature of categories in a precoded diary and the question of agreement of definitions of activities across respondents - were important considerations which influenced



the design of the diary used in the investigation.

Webb and Lyons (in Gray, 1982) reassessed some diary data that had been collected by Lyons during an investigation into the administrative duties of headteachers, deputies and senior teachers in some sixteen large comprehensive schools. Lyons' data was collected over a period of an academic year and involved samples of weekly periods.

The diary used by Lyons was of a format that required respondents to record their activities under given headings as shown in the following example taken from the diary of a Senior Mistress:

The diary format used by Lyons (Webb and Lyons, in Gray 1982,  
- The management of educational institutions.

Diary Entry of Senior Mistress

Anticipated Morning			Unanticipated Events		
Time	Event	Time	Mode	With	Event
8.15 - 8.45	See H.M. gen.prep.				
8.45 - 9.00	See pupils				
9.00 - 9.10	Assembly				
9.10 - 9.20	See a certain class				
9.20 - 10.30	Gen. Administration	9.20 - 9.53	Discuss	Youth Leader	Under-age pupils in Youth Wing
			Discuss	H.M.	Girls' lavatories
			Phone	Dep. Head	Invigilation for 'A' Level Exam.
		9.53 - 10.30	Clerical	Self	Filing and gen.paper work
			Discuss	Teacher	To invigilate mock 'A' level exam
			Discuss	Pupil	Message to exam room
			Discuss	H.M.	'O' level entries resulting from post
			Discuss	Pupil	Tummy pains
			Check	Self	Counted this week's Lent collection
			Phone	Prospective school cleaner	Took message for caretaker
			Discuss	Teacher	To take over invigilation
			Care	Pupil	Sprained ankle
			Discuss	Pupil	Coffee to exam room
10.45-11.40	Gen. Administration	10.40-11.12	Writing/Checking	Self	'O' Level results sheets
			Discuss	Pupil	Feeling sick - sore throat
			Discuss	2 pupils	Eye trouble
			Discuss	Pupil	Headache
			Discuss	Pupil	Dom. Science money owing.

Lyons' diary format, while leaving respondents free to make their own definitions of activities, does not give the opportunity for respondents to enlarge on the content of their activities (beyond naming them) or to add any thoughts, feelings or explanations that they may have about a particular activity. Thus, Lyons' diary is of the nature of a non-personal log of activities; it yields the minimum of subjective data.

The type of diary used by Stewart was of limited value to the present investigation because of the restrictive consequences of precoding and the problem of agreement of definitions of activities across respondents

using a precoded diary. The type of diary format used by Lyons was equally of limited value because it is limited to being a non-personal log of activities. Both types of diary fail to have the facility to yield the subjective data that was needed for the present investigation. However, an examination of the texts by Stewart and Webb & Lyons provided valuable insights into the advantages and disadvantages of a diary as an instrument for data collection and, indirectly, contributed to the design of the diary finally used in the present investigation.

The diary used by Cartwright, Georgiades and May (London University Secondary School Training Investigation, 1970) to study the working day of 353 secondary school teachers was of a semi-structured type in that the respondents were required to categorise their activities and describe the content of each activity. The purpose of the diary was to 'describe the broad categories of activity of which the total job is composed and to measure the amounts of time that these activities take up, for a wide sample of teachers and over a complete school year' (page 9).

From the standpoint of the present investigation an important feature of Cartwright, Georgiades and May's work is that they validated the use of the diary against activity sampling by trained observers of a sample of 20 teachers who were asked to simultaneously complete the diary. A comparison of the two sets of data yielded a correlation of 0.94 which is significant at the 0.01% level.

The diary format finally decided on for the present investigation, and discussed below, is similar to the one used by Cartwright, Georgiades and May. The present investigation owes much to one of the authors, Derek May, who kindly facilitated a close examination of the London University Secondary School Training Investigation's data and report, and he gave valuable support to the headteacher/researcher.

The design of the diary: its features and the considerations underpinning its design.

In the process of designing a diary that would yield the kind of detailed and subjective data required for the investigation, the following considerations influenced the final design.

The diary, which is reproduced as Appendix 1, has a four-column format

TIME	ACTIVITY	CONTENT	COMMENTS
			<u>not to scale</u>

with MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY and GENERAL COMMENTS pages. Each aspect of the diary is explained below.

Consideration 1

Obtaining headteachers' subjective and spontaneous descriptions and related comments and explanations.

An instrument was needed that would yield as much personal free narrative as possible - ie. a subjective and spontaneous account of what actually happened from the practising headteacher's perspective, together with related comments and explanations.

A more structured diary format than the one used would have had limitations for the investigation in that headteachers would have had to respond to given categories rather than producing their own descriptions, relevant to their unique and sometimes complex and subtle situation and

their sense of that situation. The COMMENTS column on each diary page, the MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY page for each of the five diary days and the GENERAL COMMENTS page at the end of the diary were designed to encourage the four headteachers to enlarge on their descriptions of their activities where possible with additional comments and explanations, and thereby make the diary a personal document and not merely a list of activities or a de-personalised log.

### Consideration 2

#### Focus of data collection on the 'particular', the concrete.

The central focus of the investigation is the unique activities which constitute a given headteacher's everyday workload - ie. the particular, what actually happened - as seen from the practising headteacher's perspective.

The four-column diary format (TIME, ACTIVITY, CONTENT & COMMENTS) was designed to ensure a focus on the particular and to avoid the possibility of a headteacher straying too far into writing about the general, the intended or other abstract areas. This four-column minimum guiding, focusing, structure built into the design of the diary is seen as not influencing the subjective nature of headteachers' entries.

### Consideration 3

#### Designing a diary that was workable from the respondent's point of view (ie. not too burdensome) but yet would yield the quality and quantity of data needed.

The diary pilot study showed that the complex and demanding nature of the primary school headteacher's job necessitated a diary format that would not prove too difficult or too burdensome for headteachers to complete

consistently and truthfully as part of the working day. The four-column format adopted, with its minimum structure, proved to be something that headteachers were willing to complete rather than being asked to write a totally unstructured diary of their activities and comments for five working days.

#### MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY page

At the end of each day a page headed MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY was provided for headteachers to record what they considered to have been the most noteworthy achievement, problem of situation of the day, together with comments as to whether this event had a satisfactory or unsatisfactory outcome.

At the bottom of this page the headteachers were asked to tick a box to indicate one of five categories which best describe the day:

Very atypical, Atypical, Neither typical nor atypical, Typical or Very typical.

#### GENERAL COMMENTS page

The final page of the diary is GENERAL COMMENTS and headteachers were asked to add any comments they wished to make during their involvement with the completion of the diary.

Headteachers' evaluations and responses  
having completed the diary.

After the completion of the diary each of the four headteachers completed a questionnaire consisting of four open-ended questions. The purpose of the questionnaire was to collect the headteachers' responses to completing the diary and its value in terms of the aims set out in the instructional notes on page 1 of the diary.

Diary Pilot Study.

The diary pilot study (and the later evaluations and responses of the four principal headteachers) indicate that the balance between achieving quality and quantity of data and a workable instrument for the headteachers to complete was satisfactory.

The findings of the diary pilot study are summarised below.

Originally six headteachers agreed to take part in the diary pilot study. However, only four finally took part (because of illness and non-response) and these four headteachers are referred to as Diary Pilot Headteachers 1, 2, 3 and 4.

The type of school and pupil numbers of the four Diary Pilot Headteachers was as follows:

Diary Pilot Headteacher 1 - junior school, 212 pupils

Diary Pilot Headteacher 2 - junior school, 150 pupils

Diary Pilot Headteacher 3 - infant school, 107 pupils. plus  
nursery class.

Diary Pilot Headteacher 4 - primary school, 200 pupils, plus  
nursery class.

Each of the four Diary Pilot Headteachers had more than three years of headship experience and the schools were county schools situated within the Borough of Chesley. There was no attempt to achieve a closer match to the four principal headteachers than the details given above.

The four Diary Pilot Headteachers completed the diary on five set days - in a Monday to Friday sequence - between October and December 1986. The four completed diaries were examined for quality and quantity of data yield and each of the headteachers completed a questionnaire (consisting of six open-ended questions) giving their evaluation of, and responses to, the task of filling in the diary and whether or not it achieved its purpose.

The six open-ended questions were as follows:

- 1) How many Diary days did you manage to complete?
- 2) Obviously having to complete a diary in the midst of a Headteacher's busy working day is likely to present difficulties.

Please indicate when you actually filled in your Diary - eg. as events occurred, hourly, at the end of the school morning, afternoon, at the end of the school day for the whole day or at home?  
Please comment on any variation forced on you on any day.

- 3) What other difficulties did you experience in filling in the Diary or any part of it? Please feel free to mention any difficulties you encountered.
- 4) How far does the Diary provide details as to precisely what you did in the course of the Diary days? If not, in what ways does it fall short? What are the principal omissions?
- 5) How could the diary be improved:
  - a) so that it provides a more precise account of what headteachers do during the course of a day (and their comments on their activities);
  - b) so that it would be easier to complete and/or
  - c) improved in any other ways?



- 6) What is your overall feeling about completing the Diary?  
Please give any comments or observations not included in questions 1 to 5.

The six open-ended questions yielded the following observations:

### 1. Managing to complete the diary.

Diary Pilot Headteacher 2 only managed to complete the diary on 3 out of the 5 days; the other three headteachers completed the 5 days.

### 2. Method of completing the diary.

Diary Pilot Headteacher 2 made rough notes and completed the diary 'at leisure'.

Diary Pilot Headteacher 1 and Diary Pilot Headteacher 3 filled in the diary as events occurred, with some retrospective entries at times.

Diary Pilot Headteacher 4 used different methods on each of the 3 days on which he completed the diary.

### 3. Difficulties.

Difficulties experienced by the four Diary Pilot Headteachers can be summarised as follows:

- a) 'I tended to forget when to do it' - Diary Pilot Headteacher 4
- b) Problems of recording precisely while coping with the daily workload.
- c) Problems of recording events that happened simultaneously.

'What the diary cannot do accurately is to convey the sense of urgency - items noted in

rotation have often 'arrived' at the same time and also the pressure, different in each case.' - Diary Pilot Headteacher 1

- d) Diary Pilot Headteacher 4 was anxious as to whether or not he was 'putting enough/the 'right' thing down'.
- e) The difficulty of categorising certain subtle and complex activities in order to enter them in the diary. 'It is very difficult to be precise without going into the sort of detail which would prevent any work being done at all' - Diary Pilot Headteacher 1

#### 4. Precision of the diary.

Diary Pilot Headteacher 4 thought that the three days for which he completed the diary were a precise record. The other three headteachers thought that it was a realistic picture, and that to have gone into greater detail would have obstructed the flow of the day's work.

#### 5. Possible improvements in the design of the diary.

'Very difficult to see how the diary could be improved' - Diary Pilot Headteacher 1.

'Colour coding chart for jobs we all do. I have found I hate writing mundane details' - Diary Pilot Headteacher 2.

'I think it was fine' - Diary Pilot Headteacher 3.

'Satisfactory' - Diary Pilot Headteacher 4.

#### 6. Overall responses to the task of filling in the diary.

The four Diary Pilot Headteachers' responses to completing the diary task vary a great deal, and their comments also reveal something of the nature of primary school headship as perceived by headteachers themselves. The Headteacher's comments clearly support the view of the complexity, enormity and personal nature of the job as discussed in Chapter 1. For these reasons, the Diary Pilot Headteachers' answers to the sixth question on the questionnaire are reproduced below in full.

'Very difficult to see how the diary could be

improved. If the job of head was more universal then criteria could be agreed and it would be easier to define specific activities without going into the sort of detail that would be prohibitive.'

Diary Pilot Headteacher 1.

'My honest feeling is that you have to love keeping diaries for the task to be anything but a chore. It has made me think very carefully before I do anything and ask is it really essential - should I be doing it. After the events -not while.

This term is not typical. I have done much which is really the class teacher's duties and trying to balance this situation with some tasks to keep the work I should be doing progressing. All tasks undertaken have been done with a view to lessen aggravation in the future.

I cannot offer any criticism because my situation was not typical and I am not a typical diarist.'

Diary Pilot Headteacher 2.

'I didn't mind. Felt it was a pity that for four of the five days I was not doing what I consider to be my 'head teacher' work (whatever that may be). Not unpaid supply!!'

Diary Pilot Headteacher 3.

'O.K. for informing others but I was not surprised by the volume of work/stress etc!'

... ... Bill - this is very brief! No energy to do more or write better!'

Diary Pilot Headteacher 4.

Conclusions from the diary pilot study.

The diary pilot study indicated that the diary format arrived at was satisfactory in that it achieved a balance between obtaining quality and quantity of data while at the same time proving to be a workable instrument for headteachers to complete in the course of their daily work.

However, the diary pilot study revealed the importance - the absolute dependence on - the headteachers' goodwill in completing the diary while coping with their heavy workload. It is probably for this reason that diaries

used for the study of managerial work (Stewart, 1967) and secondary school administration (Webb & Lyons, in Gray 1982) have been of a precoded and log-type format in order to reduce the enormity of the task of free narrative diary writing. As two of the Diary Pilot Headteachers commented after completing their diaries,

'I have found that I hate writing mundane details' -  
Diary Pilot Headteacher 2      and

'It's not as detailed as I would like it to be  
simply because I was always filling it in under  
pressure' - Diary Pilot Headteacher 3

Issue of the diary to the four headteachers and instructions  
for its completion.

Originally five specific days (in a Monday to Friday sequence) were set for the four headteachers to complete the diary, beginning on Monday 26th January 1987 and ending on Friday 15th May 1987. There was to be an interval of at least 15 working days between dates. The interval of fifteen working days excluded holidays, other closures, headteacher absence and days when the headteacher was working 'off site' for the whole of the day for such reasons as in-service training or school journey.

Because of sickness, school journey, forgetting to do the diary, residential in-service, school closures and study leave, not one of the four headteachers was able to complete the diary for the five set dates. However, keeping as close as possible to the given formula - ie. five working days (in a Monday to Friday sequence) with an interval of at least 15 working days between dates - the four headteachers completed their diary on the days set out in Table 5/1 below. The actual number of working days between each diary day is shown in brackets in the table. Because he forgot to complete the diary for the Wednesday set, **Headteacher 1's** diary days are not in a strict Monday to Friday sequence, though they have been put into sequence for the purpose of data analysis.

Table 5/1

Days on which the four headteachers completed the diary

The figure in brackets is the number of working days between diary days.  
**Headteacher 1's** diary days are not in a Monday to Friday sequence.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<b>Headteacher 1</b>	26th Jan. 1987 (15)	17th Feb. (31)	20th May (16)	9th April (16)	19th June
<b>Headteacher 2</b>	26th Jan. 1987 (15)	17th Feb. (15)	18th March (15)	9th April (18)	22nd May
<b>Headteacher 3</b>	9th Feb. 1987 (15)	10th Mar. (15)	1st April (14)	7th May (25)	19th June
<b>Headteacher 4</b>	26th Jan. 1987 (15)	17th Feb. (15)	18th Mar. (15)	9th April (24)	5th June

The four headteachers were given the blank diary at the end of the individual interview (January/February 1987 - discussed in Chapter Four). The instructional notes on page 1 of the diary (see Appendix 1) were discussed but the headteachers were invited to complete the diary in any way they wished so long as they felt that they were achieving the purpose of the diary as set out in the instructional notes and giving as much detail as possible.

In the diary pilot study some headteachers viewed the blank diary as a daunting task - eg. the difficulty of defining certain subtle and complex activities; the difficulty of recording everything a headteacher did; and coping with recording things that happened simultaneously. In order to minimise any anxieties that the four headteachers might have had about the task of completing the diary, at the time of the issue of the blank diary they were given a brief look at two contrasting diaries that had been completed as part of the diary pilot study.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Diary data analysis - headteachers' perceptions of the content of their workload on five given days

The purpose of the present chapter is to ascertain what the individual headteacher's workload actually consisted of, as perceived and recorded by the headteachers. Data are examined for any comparisons, regularities, patterns, possible configurations, causal flows and propositions that might help to provide a close-up and detailed account of the content of four specific instances of primary school headship 'in action' as perceived by the headteachers.

The basic unit of analysis is a discernible activity which the headteacher recorded himself or herself as having carried out (as illustrated below), and the procedure of analysis began with a search of the diaries to identify every activity that the four headteachers recorded themselves as having carried out.

The procedure of identifying and coding the activities which the headteachers recorded themselves as having carried out was more complex than it first appeared. Therefore the procedure of identifying and coding the headteachers' activities into some kind of consistent and coherent overall picture necessitated the formulation of a set of ground rules which are set out below.

Rules and system for identifying and ordering the activities which the four headteachers recorded themselves as having carried out.

1. Location of headteachers' activities within their recorded timed diary entries:

(a) single activity timed entries, and

(b) compound timed entries

The content of the diary page was divided by the headteacher into timed entries extending across the four-column page. (See Appendix 1 - the diary used.) Therefore, each timed entry has a temporal and a spatial dimension which gives it a separateness. Responding to the four headings on the page - TIME, ACTIVITY, CONTENT and COMMENTS - a headteacher's timed entry generally names one or more discernible activities together with any additional thoughts, feelings or explanations which the headteacher felt relevant to the entry.

The notion of a headteacher's 'timed entry' is important in that it differentiates between other - ie. untimed - entries made by the headteacher at other points in the diary.

The four horizontal columns on the diary page are headed as shown below, and generally a timed entry consists of:



TIME	ACTIVITY	CONTENT	COMMENTS
Time for starting the activity.	The naming of an activity, in broad terms, using one or two words or a phrase.	A sentence, sentences, phrases or a list describing the activity more specifically or commenting on it. These more specific details at times indicate that the timed entry was to do with more than one discernible self-evident activity.	Additional thoughts, feelings or explanations which the headteacher had about a particular activity.

Three of the headteachers kept to the use of the headed columns on the diary page for all their timed entries. **Headteacher 1** did so on Monday. On Tuesday and Thursday **Headteacher 1** initially used the headed columns then for the rest of those two days and for the whole of Wednesday and Friday, he:

- used the TIME and ACTIVITY columns and then wrote across the CONTENT and COMMENTS columns, or
- used the TIME column then wrote across the ACTIVITY, CONTENT and COMMENTS columns, or
- used a combination of (a) and (b).

The following are two examples of the location of an activity within a headteacher's timed entry.

**Headteacher 3, Monday.**

2.05	Administration	dealt with remainder of post
(next entry)		
2.30		

This timed entry can be seen to contain one easily discernible self-evident activity, namely (in the third column) 'dealing with remainder of the post'. The diary shows the activity lasted for twenty-five minutes, since the headteacher recorded herself as having started a different activity at 2.30.

**Headteacher 1 Monday**

9.25		Assembly		prepare hall for		Important to be
(next entry				junior assembly.		there when kids
9.30						and staff arrive

This timed entry can be seen to contain one easily discernible activity, namely (in the third column) 'prepare hall for Junior assembly'. The diary shows that the activity lasted for five minutes since the headteacher recorded himself as having started a different activity at 9.30.

A timed entry containing one activity is referred to as a single activity timed entry.

However, a timed entry may contain two or more discernible self-evident activities expressed in a compound sentence, or a list, and separated by punctuation and layout. Such an entry is referred to as a compound timed entry and the example below illustrates this class of entry.

**Headteacher 4, Tuesday: a compound entry.**

8.30		Admin.		phone call to D. O., dealing	
(next entry				with post - general	
9.00				organisation of day -	
				enrolling nursery child	

This compound timed entry can be seen to contain four discernible activities which are named in the third

column. The headteacher's timing of the next timed entry shows that the four activities were carried out in the time of 30 minutes. In line with the investigation's rules and system for defining and ordering headteachers' activities, the time of 30 minutes was divided equally between the four activities to the nearest whole minute. (See No. 2 below.)

Generally, headteachers' activities (as recorded by the headteachers themselves) were easily discernible and self-explanatory, as demonstrated above. 84% of the overall total of 441 timed entries made by the four headteachers contained only one activity. Tables 6/1 and 6/2 (below) give details of the number and types of headteachers' timed entries and the number of activities they contained.

## 2. Boundary and duration of an activity.

The boundary of an activity shown in the diary by a clear change in the nature of the activity and by the timing and layout of the headteacher's timed entry and the timed entry which follows.

### A single activity timed entry (84% of all timed entries).

In the case of a timed entry containing only one discernible activity (ie. a single activity timed entry as illustrated in the examples above) the boundary of the activity is denoted temporally by the headteacher's time given for starting the activity and time she or he gives for starting the next timed entry. The spatial dimension of the single activity timed entry, its separateness on the diary page, also helps to denote the boundary of the activity.

A compound timed entry (ie. a timed entry containing two or more discernible activities, as illustrated by the third example).

In the case of compound timed entries containing two

or more discernible activities the time was divided equally between the activities (to the nearest whole minute) unless it was felt that this would not be accurate. In the latter case appropriate approximate times were allocated to the activities at the discretion of the Headteacher/Researcher. 14% of all timed entries were compound entries.

### 3. Time not specifically accounted for by headteachers.

Time not specifically accounted for by headteachers is registered and shown at various points in the investigation's presentation of data. For example Table 6/3 (below) shows all time that was not specifically accounted for by the four headteachers - before, during and after official pupil attendance hours.

### 4. Diary entries out of time sequence.

Diary entries out of time sequence occurs once in the case of **Headteacher 1**, page 1 of the diary, Monday. This was caused by **Headteacher 1** adding entries later. For the purposes of analysis the entries were put into correct time sequence and approximate timings added where necessary.

### 5. 'Ditto' entries.

On two occasions **Headteacher 2** recorded a second timing - via a single activity timed entry - while engaged in the continuation of the same activity. This second timed entry is termed a 'ditto' entry and, since the entry does not describe a new activity, the time has been allocated to the entry before. (See Tables 6/1 and 6/2 below.)

### 6. One unclassifiable activity beyond the framework of the investigation

**Headteacher 2, Wednesday:**

8.00 pm.

Pick up E.S from Euston Station.

(E.S was a prospective teacher from Glasgow, staying with **Headteacher 2** overnight.)

This activity is beyond classification within the framework of the investigation (ie. not possible to time it or treat it as part of the headteacher's workload) and for this reason it was not used as part of the investigation's data other than as it appears in Tables 6/1 and 6/2 below.

#### 7. 'Cut off' timed entries.

Six timed entries indicate the end of the headteachers' day.

For example:

**Headteacher 2**, Friday, 6.20 pm. 'I go home.'

**Headteacher 1**, Wednesday, 10.05 pm. 'Leave school; take  
member of staff home.  
Arrive home at 10.35  
- family in bed!'

These have been termed 'Cut off' timed entries since they indicate the end of an activity but do not indicate a new activity. Beyond these six 'Cut off' entries headteachers generally indicated the time when their last activity of the day ended, and in instances where they did not the time which they gave for leaving the school was used to mark the end of their last activity of the day.

#### 8. Travelling time.

Headteachers' travelling time to school and home from school - or home from 'off site' school related activities - is not counted, even though they may have given a member of staff a lift home.

Travelling time involved in the course of the day's work is counted as part of that particular activity. For example, when attending meetings away from school or visiting a child's home, travelling time is included in the overall time of the activity. (All 'off site' activities are shown at various points in the presentation of data.)

One one occasion, **Headteacher 2** - Tuesday, travelling time was estimated (15 minutes) since the headteacher only indicated having finished the activity by a 'cut off' timed entry reading 'Got home'.

9. Before, during and after official pupil attendance hours and the overlap of activities between these categories.  
(See Table 6/3 for full details)

In the case of **Headteacher 1**, on two occasions - Tuesday and Wednesday - an activity overlapped between school time and after school time. The two activities are classified as belonging to the time category in which they were started and this is shown in Table 6/3 (below). The first activity (seeing visiting parents) overlapped by 20 minutes and the second activity (sexual abuse reported by 2 girls) overlapped by 240 minutes.

One of **Headteacher 3**'s activities - Tuesday - overlapped into after school time by 15 minutes. The activity (attending headteachers' in-set at the local Teachers' Centre) was classified as belonging to the category in which it was started and is shown as an overlap on Table 6/3 (below).

10. Using the telephone.

A telephone call to or from a separate person about a different matter is counted as a separate activity, as is any attempt to contact someone whose telephone is engaged or the person is not available.

If more than one telephone call is made or received about the same matter, then these telephone calls constitute one activity.

For example:

**Headteacher 4**, Tuesday, 10.30 am. 'Phone calls of the frantic variety - to teaching staff and the inspectorate about what I'm going to do with her class.'

This constitutes one activity - Telephone: Divisional Education Office: Teaching staff.

**Headteacher 4**, Tuesday, 9.45 am. 'Calls from parents explaining absence of children.'

This constitutes one activity - Telephone calls from parents explaining children's absences.

Sometimes a headteacher's timed entry clearly embraced more than one telephone call without any identifiable person.

For example:

**Headteacher 4**, Tuesday, 9.45 am. 'Several abortive phone calls - people out - left messages.'

This constitutes one activity - telephoning, non-specific.

#### 11. Assembly.

Sometimes headteachers indicated different kinds of activities that were related to the actual assembly.

For example:

preparing for assembly,  
preparing hall for Junior assembly,

collect 4th year juniors to get hall ready,  
check kids are getting hall ready,  
pupils clearing up,  
juniors leave to music, and  
infants exit.

These have been retained as separate activities since the headteachers perceived them as such. All activities to do with assembly have been categorised as one of:

	- Preparation and clearing with children.
Assembly----	- Preparation, not specific.
	- Assembly.
	- Children exiting.

The distribution of these categories of assembly related activities across the four headteachers is shown in Appendix 3.

#### 12. Activities outside school hours.

None of the four headteachers recorded themselves as having taken work home to do. (See No. 7 of the instructional notes at the beginning of the diary.)

#### Data reduction and display.

There was a similarity across the four headteachers in their use of categories to describe their activities. Generally, the categories indicated (in a simple or a compound way, as illustrated above) separate, discernible activities - eg. classroom visit; admin., letter writing; gathering wits (papers etc.) in preparation for interview; put on kettle and urn; finishing stock order; seeing child sent with good work; telephone answering - 1 teacher and 1 Nursery assistant out.



Throughout the investigation, analysis of diary data retains, basically, the categories and descriptions used by the four headteachers when completing the diary.

When not working alone, the four headteachers generally categorised their activities first and foremost as social interactions by firstly naming the person, or persons, involved, after which they added the content of the interaction. The following examples illustrate this perception of an activity as a social interaction:

HEADTEACHER/ TIME	ACTIVITY	CONTENT	COMMENTS
Headteacher 2	Talking to secretary	Discussed details of	
Monday 8.35		Section 11 with secretary.	
Headteacher 4	Seeing parents	Discussing children	
Monday 9.15		leaving early - child guidance appointments.	
Headteacher 3	Distressed child	New admittance, tried to	
Monday 9.15		reassure child.	
Headteacher 1	Discussion with	Stock delivery, new	Schoolkeeper
Monday 8.10	Schoolkeeper	Fire signs, jobs in hand	is a good professional - doesn't waste time

The notion that much of the four headteachers' everyday workload consisted of a wide range of social interactions is explored below under the heading 'The largely interactional nature of the headteachers' activities'.

The four headteachers' timed entries and the number of activities they named.

Analysis of the four diaries - using the rules and system detailed above - revealed that the four headteachers made a total of 441 timed entries during the five working days for which they completed the diary. The 441 timed entries named 524 discernible activities (excluding the one unclassifiable activity beyond the framework of the investigation - see Rule 6 above) which the four headteachers recorded as having made up their workload on the five days.

Table 6/1 (below) illustrates the differentiation of the 441 timed entries on the basis of the number of activities they contained.

TABLE 6/1   <u>Headteachers' timed entries and the number of activities they named</u>			
Percentage of all timed entries	Number of timed entries	Type of timed entry	Number of activities
2%	1	Unclassifiable (see Rule 6, above)	0
	6	'Cut off' (see Rule 7, above)	0
	2	'Ditto' (see Rule 5, above)	0
84%	370	naming one activity	370
14%	42	naming two activities	84
	12	naming three activities	36
	6	naming four activities	24
	2	naming five activities	10
100%	441		524

*over page*  
Table 6/2 (~~below~~) gives a more detailed break-down  
and comparison of the number and types of headteachers'  
timed entries and the number of activities they contain.

TABLE 6/2

Number and types of headteachers' timed entries and the number of entries they contained:  
 (a) across the five days for each headteacher, and  
 (b) across the four headteachers.

Head- teacher	Day	Unclass- ifiable timed entry	"Cut off timed entries	"Ditto" timed entries	Timed entries containing one activity	Timed entries containing two activities	Timed entries containing three activities	Timed entries containing four activities	Timed entries containing five activities	Total number of timed entries	Total number of activities
One	Mon				21	1		1		23	
	Tue				13	3	1			17	
	Wed		1		10					11	
	Thu				7		2			9	
	Fri				8	2	1			11	
Totals:					59	6	4	1		71	87
Two	Mon			1	38	3				42	
	Tue			1	43	4				49	
	Wed	1	1		20					22	
	Thu			1	36	1				38	
	Fri			1	45					46	
Totals:					182	8				197	198
Three	Mon				16	5				21	
	Tue				15					15	
	Wed				11	2	3	1		17	
	Thu				7	4	1			12	
	Fri				18	1				19	
Totals:					67	12	4	1		84	107
Four	Mon				11	4	2		1	18	
	Tue			1	10	1	1	2		15	
	Wed				13	4		1		18	
	Thu				18	2			1	21	
	Fri				10	5	1	1		17	
					62	16	4	4	2	89	132
Totals for 4 Heads:					370	42	12	6	2	441	524

Table 6/3 (below) gives a detailed break-down and comparison of:

- a) In column 1: Headteachers' working times - before, during and after official pupil attendance hours - as recorded by the headteachers themselves.
- b) In column 2: Time not specifically accounted for by the headteachers when completing the diary, which is included in the total working time (column 1) and shown separately in column 2 - before, during and after official pupil attendance hours.
- c) In column 3: The number of activities which the headteachers recorded themselves as having carried out before, during and after official pupil attendance hours. O/L indicates the overlap of an activity (see Rule 9 above) from official pupil attendance hours into after official school hours.

TABLE 6/3

Headteachers' working times and number of activities recorded

B = Before official pupil attendance hours, in minutes

S = During official pupil attendance hours, in minutes

A = After official pupil attendance hours, in minutes

T = Totals

The three vertical columns for each day indicate:

Total minutes worked, including time not accounted for.

Time not accounted for.

Number of activities recorded.

O/L denotes that an activity overlapped from the previous category of time.

Head- teacher		MON			TUE			WED			THU			FRI			TOTAL					
		Mins.	T	N/A Act's	Mins.	T	N/A Act's	Mins.	T	N/A Act's	Mins.	T	N/A Act's	Mins.	T	N/A Act's	Mins.	T	N/A Act's			
ONE	B	50		5	7	55		5	55		4	30	10	2	50	10	3	240	25	21		
	S	390		5	16	390		5	15	390		5	390		60	11	390		12	1,950	70	59
	A	120			4	120	70	2+O/L	395		1+O/L				75	75		710	145	7		
	T	560	(10)		27	565	(75)	22	840		10	420	(70)	13	515	(85)	15	2,900	(240)	87		
TWO	B	45			9	75		8	50		3	30		2	30		4	230		26		
	S	390		5	30	390		31	390		15	390		28	390		5	35	1,950	10	139	
	A	135			5	195	5	12	120		2	240		8	170		6	860	5	33		
	T	570	(5)		44	660	(5)	51	560		20	660		38	590	(5)	45	3,040	(15)	198		
THREE	B					15		2	30		4	15		3	15	5	1	75	5	10		
	S	405			26	405	30	13	405		20	405		12	405	15	15	2,025	45	86		
	A	75	75			15		O/L	75		4	105		3	90		4	360	75	11		
	T	480	(75)		26	435	(30)	15	510		28	525		18	510	(20)	20	2,460	(125)	107		
FOUR	B	25			5	25		4	25		2	25		2	25		3	125		16		
	S	395		5	22	350		5	19	395	10	19	395		23	395		22	1,930	20	105	
	A	120			3				45		4	75	15	2	60		2	300	15	11		
	T	540	(5)		30	375	(5)	23	465	(10)	25	495	(15)	27	480		27	2,355	(35)	132		
		2,150	(95)		127	2,035	(115)	111	2,375	(10)	83	2,100	(85)	96	2,095	(110)	107	10,755	(415)	524		

Examination of Table 6/3 shows a difference in the official pupil attendance hours between the four schools. The official school day for pupils is 5½ hours (5 hours for infant pupils), with a lunch break of 1 hour. This makes the official pupil attendance time 390 minutes, which was worked by the four headteachers since only one of them recorded himself as having taken a lunch break - **Headteacher 2**, Monday, 'lunch in my office', 5 minutes.

**Headteacher 3's** school has a different home-time (and different lunch time) for infants and juniors, resulting in a 405 minute official pupil school day. **Headteacher 4's** school starts 5 minutes early, resulting in a 395 minute official school day for pupils.

The largely interactional nature of  
the headteachers' activities

An analysis of the 524 activities which the four headteachers recorded themselves as having carried out yielded, across the four diaries, an implicit view of the headteacher's everyday workload as consisting largely of a network of social interactions, with relatively little time where the headteacher was working alone.

Pursuing the notion of the headteacher's job as largely consisting of a network of social interactions, four categories of headteachers' activities can be differentiated on the basis of whether the headteacher was:

- a) working alone;
- b) off site, not involved with teachers or children in curricular activities;
- c) telephoning, making and receiving calls; or
- d) working with other people, children and/or adults.

Table 6/4 (below) shows the distribution of headteachers' activities on the basis of the criteria set out in (a) to (d) above.

TABLE 6/4

Distribution of headteachers' activities on the basis of whether headteacher was:

- (1) working alone  
 (2) off site (not involving teachers or children - ie. non-curricular activities)  
 (3) telephoning - making and receiving calls; or  
 (4) working with other people - children or adults.

Headteacher	Day	ALONE	OFF-SITE	TELEPHONE	WITH OTHER PEOPLE	TOTAL
One	Mon	3		4	20	27
	Tue	4		2	16	22
	Wed				10	10
	Thu	6	1 DO 4	1	5	13
	Fri	3	1 DO 4		11	15
Totals:		16	2	7	62	87
Two	Mon	9	1 took car to garage	1	33	44
	Tue	9		5	37	51
	Wed	2	1 shopping for visiting teacher	3	14	20
	Thu	3	2 visit school, staffing car to garage	10	23	38
	Fri	1		8	36	45
Totals:		24	4	27	143	198
Three	Mon	5			21	26
	Tue	3	1 Heads' course	3	8	15
	Wed	7		2	19	28
	Thu	3		1	14	18
	Fri	4		1	15	20
Totals:		22	1	7	77	107
Four	Mon	6		4	20	30
	Tue	3	1 visit school, staffing	10	9	23
	Wed	6			19	25
	Thu	7		6	14	27
	Fri	5	1 lunch with head	7	14	27
Totals:		27	2	27	76	132
		89	9	68	358	524
Totals:		16.98%	1.72%	12.98%	68.32%	100%



Further examination of the 524 activities which the four headteachers recorded themselves as having carried out revealed that the activities could be differentiated further - ie. beyond the categories contained in Table 6/4 (above) - into 16 categories according to their interactional, or non-interactional, nature. A floating category was needed for time not specifically accounted for by the four headteachers when completing the diary.

Differentiation into the 16 categories was achieved by a two-stage process. Initially differentiation was made on the following criteria:

- 1) Whether the activity was non-interactional - ie. a category where the headteacher recorded himself or herself as working alone.
- 2) A category where the headteacher clearly indicated the use of the telephone.
- 3) Whether the activity fitted into a self-explanatory category which described an aspect of primary school order eg. assembly, playground supervision, lunch-time supervision, touring/monitoring in a 'figurehead' role.
- 4) A category where the headteacher indicated having left the school premises for a purpose other than a curricular activity involving children and teachers. For example, visiting the Divisional Education Office, attending an in-service course, taking car to garage.
- 5) Where an activity was significant enough to be differentiated as untypical it was allocated to a category of its own - as in the case of Nos. 14, 15 and 16 below.

The second stage of the process of differentiating the headteachers' 524 activities into 16 categories according to their interactional, or non-interactional, nature consisted of categorising on the following criteria:

The self-evident predominant type of person or persons (eg. teacher, children, visitor, governors, support staff) with whom the headteacher interacted in the course of carrying out the activity.

The 16 categories, set out below, have been termed 16 basic interactional categories and form part of the investigations' analytical framework. For convenience the 16 basic interactional categories have been numbered one to sixteen.

As stated above, diary analysis retains, basically, the categories used by the four headteachers when completing their diaries.

Appendix 3 of the investigation contains a further break-down of the activities categorised into the 16 basic interactional categories, and this presentation of data provides a detailed account of the content of the workload of the four headteachers on five working days as perceived and recorded by the headteachers themselves.

#### 16 basic interactional categories.

1. Administration/office  
- Headteacher working ALONE.
2. Other time Headteacher ALONE.
3. Off site - Not with teachers or children - ie. non-curricular.
4. Headteacher's routine activities: a blend of
  - (a) figurehead role,
  - (b) the supervision & monitoring of children outside the classroom.
  - (c) general contact with pupils outside the classroom.

#### Specifically:

assembly;  
playground - supervision, monitoring, etc;  
lunch supervision;  
Fire drill;  
Touring the school/visiting classes as figurehead;  
monitoring/greeting children on arrival at school, into school after play end and off at home time.

5. Telephoning
  - Making and receiving calls. An activity can consist of more than one telephone call.
6. Teachers.
7. Support Staff
  - Secretary; Schoolkeeper; Helpers; Meals supervisors and Cleaner.
8. Children - seeing children  
visiting classes not as figurehead tour;  
teaching, covering and other curricular activities.
9. Parents - Not parent governor activities.
10. Governors - Chairperson;  
Parent Governors;  
Meeting;  
Chairing panel for teacher interview.
11. Local Education Authority personnel (ie. coming into school).
  - Educational Psychologist;  
Teacher for travellers' children;  
secondary school teacher;  
Education Welfare Officer;  
E.W.O. for Homeless Families;  
Induction Co-ordinator;  
Equipment Officer;  
Security Officer.
12. Support Agencies - non-L.E.A.
  - School Doctor;  
Social Worker.
13. Visitors - Woman from Swedish Ed. T.V.;  
Photocopier engineer  
new voluntary reading + visiting helper;  
Home beat Policeman;  
Police - attempted break-in;  
Photographer.
14. Sexual abuse reported by 2 girls. (**Headteacher 1**,  
Wednesday)  
Involving: children; social services;  
police; doctors; school staff; Father.  
Duration = 540 minutes.
15. Staff Party (**Headteacher 2**, Thursday)  
- 170 minutes
16. Non-specific activity with other staff (**Headteacher 3**,  
Wednesday)  
- differentiated as not classifiable.  
= 20 minutes

Frequency and duration of the headteachers' 524 activities  
as allocated to the 16 basic interactional categories.

Table 6/5A (below) shows the frequency of each of the 16 basic interactional categories as a percentage of the total 524 activities which the four headteachers themselves as having carried out.

Table 6/5B (below) shows the duration of the 16 basic interactional categories as a percentage of the 10,755 minutes the four headteachers recorded themselves as having worked. The 10,755 minutes includes 415 minutes that the headteachers did not account for specifically, which is 3.86% of the total 10,755 minutes recorded.

TABLE 6/5A

Frequency of headteachers' activities

Frequency of the 16 basic interactional categories of activities as a percentage of the total 524 activities which the four headteachers recorded themselves as having carried out.

Interactional category, in order of frequency.		Number of activities	Percentage of total 524 activities
6	Teachers	96	18.32
4	Headteacher's routine activities (ie. with adults and/or children)	74	14.12
5	Telephone (Making and receiving calls not differentiated)	68	12.98
1	Administration/office - ALONE	66	12.60
7	Support staff (Secretary; Schoolkeeper; Helpers; Meals Supervisor and Cleaner)	59	11.26
8	Children	55	10.50
9	Parents (Not parent governor activities)	35	6.68
2	Other ALONE	23	4.39
13	Visitors	13	2.48
11	L.E.A. personnel	13	2.48
3	Off site (Not with teachers or children - ie. non-curricular)	9	1.72
10	Governors (including parent governors)	6	1.14
12	Support Agencies (ie. non-L.E.A.)	4	0.76
14	Sexual abuse reported by 2 girls. H.1, Wed. Differentiated as untypical	1	0.19
15	Staff Party H.2 Thursday. Differentiated as untypical	1	0.19
16	Non-specific activity with other members of staff. H.3 Wed.	1	0.19
		524	100%

TABLE 6/5B

Duration of headteachers' activities

Duration of the 16 basic interactional categories of activities as a percentage of the total 10,755 minutes (179 hours 25 minutes) which the four headteachers recorded themselves as having worked. The 10,755 minutes includes 415 minutes which headteachers did not account for specifically.

Interactional category, in order of total duration	Number of activities	Total time in minutes	Percentage total time
4 Headteacher's routine activities (ie. with adults and/or children)	74	1,564	14.54
6 Teachers	96	1,549	14.40
8 Children	55	1,292	12.01
1 Administration/office - ALONE	66	1,196	11.12
5 Telephone (Making and receiving calls not differentiated)	68	800	7.44
9 Parents (Not parent governor activities)	35	735	6.83
7 Support staff (Secretary; Schoolkeeper; Helpers; Meals Supervisors and Cleaner)	59	566	5.26
14 Sexual abuse reported by 2 girls. H.1, Wed. Differentiated as untypical	1	540	5.02
3 Off site (Not with teachers or children, ie. non-curricular)	9	490	4.56
11 L.E.A. personnel	13	485	4.51
2 Other ALONE	23	305	2.84
10 Governors (including parent governor activities)	6	275	2.56
13 Visitors	13	248	2.31
15 Staff Party H.2 Thurs. Differentiated as untypical	1	170	1.58
12 Support Agencies, non-L.E.A.	4	100	0.93
16 Non-specific activity with other members of staff. H.3 Wed.	1	25	0.23
TIME NOT SPECIFICALLY ACCOUNTED FOR	-	415	3.86
	524	10,755	100%

Much of the data contained in the previous Tables can be set out as Displays (Miles and Huberman, 1984, page 79) which present, simultaneously, a range of information about the headteacher's day from which conclusions can be drawn and verified.

The Displays (below) systematically present the 16 basic interactional categories in a spatial format from which emerges a conception of the headteacher as being at the centre of a network of social interactions which constitute the bulk of the everyday workload, with 16.98% of working time alone (see Table 6/4 above).

A Display showing information about **Headteacher 2's** Tuesday is reproduced below as an example. Appendix 2 contains 20 Displays presenting information for each of the 20 days for which the four headteachers completed the diary.

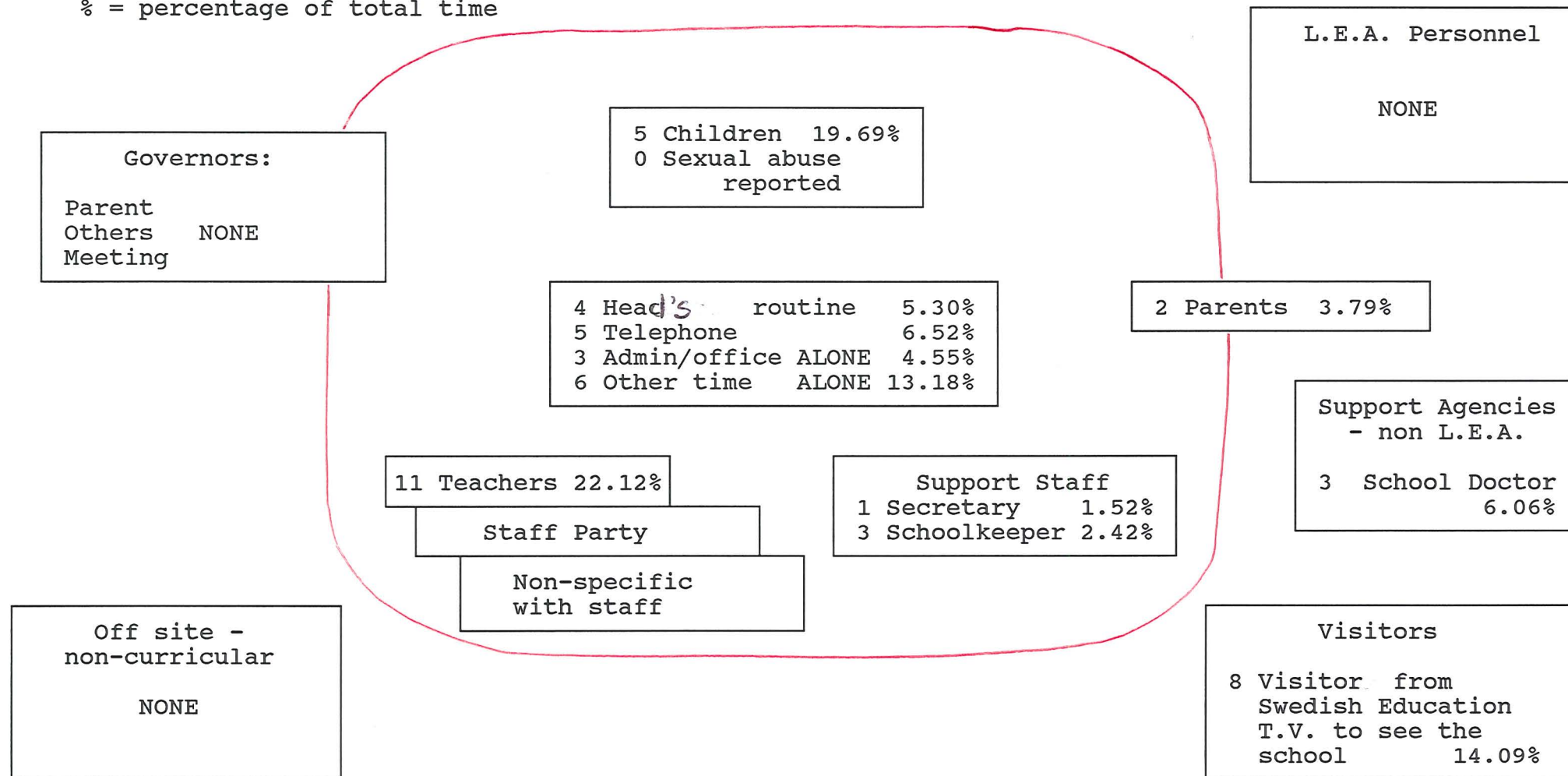
HEADTEACHER 2 Tues.

Total number of activities : 51  
Total time : 660 mins (11 hrs)

Before 75 Official Hours. 390 After 195

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 5 mins.: 0.76%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time





The content of headteachers' activities as perceived and recorded by the headteachers themselves; analysis in more detail than the use of the 16 basic interactional categories: Appendix 3

Appendix 3 presents the headteachers' descriptions of the content of their activities in greater detail than previously. Analysis goes beyond the use of the 16 basic interactional categories and presents, as Appendix 3 (Detailed breakdown of the content of each headteacher's total activities for the five days across the four headteachers: 16 Tables), details of the 524 activities which have previously been presented as categories of activities, ie. categories into one of the 16 basic interactional categories.

Descriptions of the content of the 524 activities recorded by the headteachers and used in Appendix 3 are basically those descriptions used by the headteachers themselves, with a minimum of reduction for the purposes of data analysis and presentation.

Each of the 16 Tables which constitute Appendix 3 was constructed by collecting headteachers' descriptions of the content of their activities across the four diaries for each of the 16 basic interactional categories. The descriptions of activity content were then organised into an accumulative and coherent whole - using the 16 basic interactional categories as a framework - with easy agreement of descriptions between the four headteachers, using the rules and system set out above.

The 16 Tables in Appendix 3 show each headteacher's total activities for the five days, and this arrangement gives a comparison of frequency of activities across the four headteachers.

Some observations on the results of the analysis of  
headteachers' activities

1. The headteachers' responses  
on having completed the diary

As was stated in Chapter Five, the completed diaries do not record every small activity and social interaction that the headteachers were involved in during the five diary days. The diaries record what the headteachers regarded as significant in their attempts to provide a detailed record of precisely what they did on the five given days.

After the completion of the diary each of the four headteachers responded to a questionnaire consisting of four open-ended questions giving information about:

- 1) their particular method of filling in the diary;
- 2) any difficulties they experienced in completing it;
- 3) their opinion as to its accuracy and possible shortcomings; and
- 4) their overall feeling about completing it.

The headteachers' responses to the first question, about their particular method of filling in the diary, are discussed in Chapter Seven.

The difficulties that the four headteachers experienced in filling in the diary were similar to those found by the four Diary Pilot Headteachers, as discussed in Chapter Five. **Headteacher 1** said that he had no difficulties in completing the diary and he liked its 'open nature'. **Headteacher 2** said that he had no real difficulty, though it got to be a chore. **Headteacher 3** felt that she had been limited in her comments because she is not over fond of writing. **Headteacher 4** cited the difficulty of naming activities and the problems caused by trying to record activities that happened simultaneously.

The four headteachers thought that the diary was a fairly accurate account, and that to have gone into more detail would have made the instrument unworkable without obstructing the day's work and thereby creating an artificial situation. (This was also the conclusion reached by the four Diary Pilot Headteachers.) **Headteacher 4's** response is typical of the four headteachers:

'I think it's a fairly accurate record. If I'd tried to provide more minutiae I don't think I could have finished it and it probably would have been too unwieldy.'

The headteachers' overall feeling about completing the diary varied. **Headteacher 1** found it a useful exercise in that it confirmed what he had long suspected:

'... our job is vague and unclear, but we can do it well if we have clear short- and long-term objectives and if we are well supported by our Authority and its Inspectors.'

**Headteacher 2's** summing up of his overall feeling about completing the diary was:

'The task is asking too much of the subject. Unless the subject is a boring old pedant like me they will inevitably not provide enough information or fake some entries.'

**Headteacher 3** at times felt sorry that she had agreed to take part in the project, though she found it a salutary exercise in the sense of looking at her personal approach to the job.

**Headteacher 4** felt that having to complete the diary was an additional thing to do and that she could have done without it:

'On my very bad day it was the last thing I wanted to do but paradoxically it was helpful to be able to let off steam about it.'

## 2. The particular strengths of the diary data.

The data yield what is accepted as a fairly accurate record of the individual headteacher's perceptions of the multiplicity of activities which the headteachers recorded as having made up their everyday workload on the five days for which they completed the diary. In this respect the data portray a complex reality and identify in depth the unique features of four instances of primary school headship 'in action' as perceived and recorded by the headteachers themselves. Findings show that the diary as a research instrument was able to capture the uncontrolled variables, subtleties and complexities of the headteacher's workload.

## 3. Comparison of the distribution of headteachers' activities and working times.

Analysis of diary data in the present Chapter is concerned with ascertaining what the individual headteacher's workload actually consisted of, as perceived and recorded by the individual headteacher on each of the five diary days.

Table 6/3 and Table 6/6 (below) show that there are no regularities or patterns underpinning the distribution of headteachers' activities and working times.

TABLE 6/6

Comparisons of the distribution of headteachers' activities and working times:

(a) across each of the four headteacher's five days and

(b) across the four headteachers.

	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Totals	
	Act's	Mins.										
	worked											
Headteacher 1	27	560	22	565	10	840	13	420	15	515	87	2,900
Headteacher 2	44	570	51	660	20	560	38	660	45	590	198	3,040
Headteacher 3	26	480	15	435	28	510	18	525	20	510	107	2,460
Headteacher 4	30	540	23	375	25	465	27	495	27	480	132	2,355
Totals	127	2,150	111	2,035	83	2,375	96	2,100	107	2,095	524	10,755

Examination of Table 6/6 (above) shows that **Headteacher 2** recorded significantly more activities than the other three headteachers, and, with the exception of Wednesday (when he spent 32.14% of his time with the Educational Psychologist, 5 case conferences - see Appendix 2 Display) he recorded more activities per day. The conclusions are:

- 1) from an examination of his diary **Headteacher 2** managed to record in greater detail than the other three headteachers, and
- 2) he worked longer hours than the other three headteachers on every day except Wednesday, when **Headteacher 1** left school at 10.05 pm. after a governors' meeting.

On Monday **Headteacher 2** found it difficult to write legibly, so he recorded his Tuesday to Friday activities

roughly onto photocopied diary pages and wrote them into the actual diary at home with very little alteration. Also, **Headteacher 1** kept his record of activities and comments (as they occurred) in his own large diary and wrote them up at the end of the day, sometimes adding information. This issue - how and when the diaries were written - is taken up in Chapter Seven when the diaries are examined as written discourse and the methodological implications this carries.

Table 6/6 shows the working times of the individual headteachers and these times do not include any work taken home since none of the headteachers recorded themselves as having done so.

The duration of the average working day for each of the headteachers was as follows:

**Headteacher 1:** 9 hours 40 mins;

**Headteacher 2:** 10 hours 8 mins;

**Headteacher 3:** 8 hours 12 mins;

**Headteacher 4:** 7 hours 51 mins.

Appendix 3 shows that the headteachers did not generally take a proper lunch break (only 3 lunch breaks were recorded where the headteacher was alone or off site) and they often ate their meals with the children while supervising.

#### 4. The question of there being a typical day

At the bottom of the MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY pages in the diary, the headteachers were asked to tick a box to indicate one of five categories - very atypical, atypical, neither typical nor atypical, typical or very typical - which best described the day. The responses to this request are set out in Table 6/7 below.

TABLE 6/7

Typicality of the Headteachers' day

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Headteacher 1	Typical	Typical	Nil response	Nil response	Nil response
Headteacher 2	Atypical	Atypical	Very atypical	Atypical	Atypical
Headteacher 3	Neither typical nor atypical	Atypical	Typical	Neither typical nor atypical	Atypical
Headteacher 4	Very atypical	Very atypical	Neither typical nor atypical	Typical	Typical

The four headteachers rarely describe a day as typical and this raises the possibility - at least at the level of headteachers' perceptions - that routine activities are at a minimum; each day appears to headteachers as a day unto itself and this is the typicality of the headteacher's everyday workload.

#### 5. Some of the main features of the headteacher's workload

An examination of the 524 activities which the four headteachers recorded themselves as having carried out during their five diary days (see particularly Appendix 3) lead to the conclusions set out below. The diaries show that the headteachers were often reacting to situations which emerged rather than carrying out planned activities. Similarly, from the headteachers' written comments, many activities occurred simultaneously. However, it is difficult to demonstrate these two often inter-related characteristics - the reactive nature of much of the job and the ways in which some activities occurred simultaneously - and perhaps the diary could have been better designed to capture these important features of the headteacher's everyday workload.

#### Tentative conclusions:

- 1) The workload is perceived by the four headteachers as a relatively heavy and sometimes ambiguous one. (See discussion below.)
- 2) Data analysis suggests that the job has little planned structure beyond assemblies, lunch supervision and covering for teachers on weekly in-service.
- 3) From what the four headteachers recorded, the workload consists of a wide range of tasks, lasting from 2 minutes to 540 minutes in duration. (See No 9 below and Appendix 3.)
- 4) Many of the activities that the four headteachers recorded appear to have been emergent rather than planned, and many activities occurred simultaneously: both of these inter-related characteristics implicitly suggest that the



individual headteacher was often in the position of having to react and also select and prioritise between activities.

- 5) Data analysis shows that the job is predominately people-orientated (See Table 6/4).

6. Activities common across each individual headteacher's five working days - by frequency and by duration.

Table 6/5A (above) shows that the six most frequent categories of activities were:

Teachers	96 out of the total 524 activities recorded.
Headteacher's routine activities	74
Telephone	68
Admin/office ALONE	66
Support staff	59
Children	55

However, Table 6/5B (above) shows a different top six categories of activities when the criterion of measurement is duration of time:

Headteacher's routine activities	14.54% of total time.
Teachers	14.40%
Children	12.01%
Admin/office ALONE	11.12%
Telephone	7.44%
Parents	6.83%

These figures show that there is not a correspondence between frequency of activities and duration of activities, which is common in all phases of diary data analysis, as illustrated again below:

Categories of activities most common to each headteacher, using frequency as the criterion, were as follows:

**Headteacher 1**

Headteacher routine activities on 4 days; Admin/office ALONE on 1 day.

**Headteacher 2**

Teachers on 4 days; Support staff on 1 day.

**Headteacher 3**

Support staff on 2 days; Admin/office ALONE on 2 days; Children 1 day.

**Headteacher 4**

Telephone on 2 days; Support staff 1 day; Children 1 day; Admin/office ALONE 1 day.

However, when the criteria is time spent on activities, a different picture emerges as to the categories on which the headteachers spent most time each day:

**Headteacher 1**

Headteacher routine activities on 4 days; Sexual abuse case 1 day.

**Headteacher 2**

Teachers on 2 days; Parents 1 day; LEA personnel (Ed. Psych) 1 day; Staff Party 1 day.

**Headteacher 3**

Admin/office ALONE, Off site, Parents, Children, Support staff - all 1 day.

**Headteacher 4**

Teachers, Telephone, Children, Admin/office ALONE, Off site - all 1 day.

As already stated, there is not a correspondence

between frequency of activities and duration of activities, and operating both criteria creates a complex text. Therefore, frequency criterion is generally used in the investigation since the study is more concerned with obtaining details of what headteachers did - ie. headteachers' subjective descriptions of the content of their everyday job - rather than with precise timings of headteachers' activities.

Using the data information extracted from the diaries and finally reduced to construct the 16 tables which constitute Appendix 3 (Detailed break-down of the content of each headteacher's total activities for the five days across the four headteachers: 16 Tables) the detailed descriptions of headteachers' activities can be examined across the four headteachers using the 16 basic interactional categories as an overall framework.

In the search for what activities might be common across each headteacher's five diary days, the following emerged, which is extracted from Appendix 3.

**Headteacher 1** - described a total of 87 activities.

Not one of these activities was carried out every day.

Activities carried out on four days were:

Playground - supervision and checking supervision.  
Lunch supervision (and having lunch).

Activities carried out on three days were:

Assembly.  
Teachers - greeting chatting and listening.  
Schoolkeeper - maintenance/routine.  
Prospective parents to look round.

**Headteacher 2** described a total of 198 activities.

Activities carried out on all five days were:

Routine admin./office Work ALONE

Supervising children into school after play.  
Secretary - routine matters.

Activities carried out on four days:

Teachers - organisation and routine matters.  
Seeing children - bad behaviour.  
Teaching (group/class/combined classes)

Activities carried out on three days:

Having break/coffee ALONE.  
Assembly - preparation.  
Assembly.  
Telephone - teacher recruitment.  
Schoolkeeper - maintenance/routine.

**Headteacher 3** - described a total of 107 activities.

Activities carried out on all five days were:

Dealing with mail ALONE.  
Lunch supervision (and having lunch).

Activities carried out on four days:

Teachers - organization and routine.

Activities carried out on three days:

Routine admin/office work ALONE.  
Admin - School Doctor ALONE.  
Having a break/coffee ALONE.  
Assembly.  
Deputy Head - general organisation/routine.  
Secretary - routine.

**Headteacher 4** - described a total of 132 activities.

Activities carried out on all five days were:

Routine admin/office work ALONE.

Activities carried out on four days:

Dealing with mail ALONE.  
Admin - teaching staff ALONE.  
Assembly.  
Lunch supervision (and having lunch).  
Teachers - organisation/routine matters.  
Secretary - routine matters.  
Seeing children - good work.

Activities carried out on three days:

Telephone - teaching staff at Div. Ed. Office.  
Telephone - not specific.  
Deputy Head - general organisation/routine.

Seeing children - bad behaviour.  
Teaching - (group/class/combined classes).

7. Activities most frequent across each of the  
five diary days.

Examination of the headteachers' 524 activities for frequency across each of the five days, Monday to Friday, shows the following regularities and patterns:

Monday.

The most frequent category of activity was Support staff - Headteachers 2, 3 & 4.

The second most frequent category of activity was Headteacher routine activities, Headteacher 1.

Tuesday.

Each headteacher had their own most frequent category of activity:

<b>Headteacher 1</b>	Headteacher routine activities
<b>Headteacher 2</b>	Teachers
<b>Headteacher 3</b>	Admin/office work - ALONE
<b>Headteacher 4</b>	Telephone.

Wednesday.

Each headteacher had their own most frequent category of activity:

<b>Headteacher 1</b>	Headteacher routine activities
<b>Headteacher 2</b>	Teachers
<b>Headteacher 3</b>	Admin/office work - ALONE
<b>Headteacher 4</b>	Children.

Thursday.

The most frequent category of activity was:

Admin/office work - ALONE -  
**Headteachers 1 and 4**

The second most frequent category of activity was:

**Headteacher 2** Telephone.  
**Headteacher 3** Children.

Friday.

Each headteacher had their own most frequent category of activity:

**Headteacher 1** Headteacher routine activities  
**Headteacher 2** Teachers  
**Headteacher 3** Support staff  
**Headteacher 4** Telephone.

#### 8. Activities most frequent across the four headteachers

The information in Appendix 3 makes possible a comparison of activity frequency across the four headteachers, using the headteachers' 5-day totals of each activity.

An examination of the headteachers' activities presented within the 16 basic interactional categories produced the following information (Table 6/8) about frequency of activities across the four headteachers.

Table 6/8

Activity frequency across the four headteachers:  
Activities carried out (once or more) by all four headteachers  
 (see Appendix 3 for further details)

Basic interaction category	Number of different activities given by headteachers within the category	Activities carried out (once or more) by all four headteachers	Total number of activities carried out in category
1. Admin/office ALONE	11	Routine admin/office work - ALONE	66
2. Other time ALONE	10	None	23
3. Off site (not with teachers or children - non-curricular)	7	None	9
4. Headteacher routine activities	12	Assembly Lunch supervision and having lunch	74
5. Telephone	33	None	68
6. Teachers	25	Deputy Head: general organisation/ routine matters Greeting, informally chatting and listening (not specific) Other, not specific	96
7. Support staff	10	Secretary: routine matters Schoolkeeper: maintenance routine/ matters	59
8. Children	19	None	55
9. Parents	20	None	35
10. Governors	6	None	6
11. L.E.A. (coming into school)	9	None	13

continued

Table 6/8 continued

Basic interaction category	Number of different activities given by headteachers within the category	Activities carried out (once or more) by all four headteachers	Total number of activities carried out in category
12 Support agencies, non-L.E.A	2	None	4
13. Other visitiors	6	None	13
14. Sexual abuse (reported by 2 girls Headteacher 1 Wednesday)	1	None	1
15. Staff party (Headteacher 3 Thursday)	1	None	1
16. Non-specific activity with other staff (Headteacher 3 Wednesday)	1	None	1
			524



9. Activities which demonstrate the complex and ambiguous nature of the headteachers' workload.

Analysis of the headteachers' 524 activities which they recorded themselves as having carried out reveal activities which can be taken as illustrating the emergent picture of the primary school headteacher's job as complex and at times ambiguous. The unanticipated nature of many of the headteachers' activities and the fact that activities at times occurred simultaneously were two features of the job raised above (in No. 5), and these two features of the headteacher's workload can be seen as generating complexity, ambiguity and the resultant lack of planned structure and fragmentation that appear to be an inherent part of the job.

From the diary entries, the headteachers did not generally appear to approach the day in any systematic way, rather the needs of the day often emerged and the headteacher responded. (The headteachers may well have had some kind of plan in mind, and there is the occasional mention of 'the day's duties' and 'programme for the day' without it ever being apparent as to what these plans consisted of.) The examples of the four headteachers' diary entries for the first hour of the Monday morning demonstrate unpredictability and the absence of planning:

Headteacher 1 from 8.10 am.

Discussion with Schoolkeeper: Stock delivery, new Fire signs, jobs in hand.

Telephone answering: 1 teacher and 1 Nursery assistant out.

Telephoning: Phoned list of supply teachers (4) only 1 available. Organised cover of quite 'lively' class.

Admin.: Secretary off for the week with 'flu. Need to cover office for dinner money, general admin. etc.

Put on kettle and urn: It's important in my view that the school should be as welcoming as possible for staff as well as children and parents.

Greet staff, listen and respond if poss.: 3 teachers out, 1 secretary away, 1 nursery assistant away. 1 supply available so I count my blessings.

**Headteacher 2 - from 8.15 am.**

Saw secretary: She informed me that one junior teacher absent.  
... Acting deputy at funeral, so two teachers short; Deputy's class at home (known absence) so one class to split.

Took car to local garage for service (8.20 am.)

Returned to school: Secretary tells me that p/t secretary is sick, off all week. Bad news! She was to type up my section 11 form. It is already late ... ..

Talking to secretary: Discussed details of Section 11 with secretary.

Office work: Tidy desk and organise myself for day.

Visited staffroom: Wrote up notes for the day ie. staff info. ... ..

Saw S/K: Talked about toilets, burst pipes etc. Discussed S/K industrial action. ... ..

Went to playground: Called kids in.

Saw music teacher: Quick chat about Chinese New Year Assembly for Fri.

Went to M.W.'s class: Did register.

**Headteacher 3 - from 9.00 am.**

D/H reported absence of 2 members of staff: ... .. cover arranged for both.

Spoke to Sch. keeper: Sch. keeper returned from sick-leave.

Parent: Parental concern over my injury.

Distressed child: New admittance - I tried to reassure child.

Assembly Preparation.

Assembly: Feelings - LOVE - VALENTINE'S DAY.  
Had to shorten assembly because of

injured back.

Secretarial Routine: Spoke to secretary about day's duties.  
Made arrangements for meals  
supervision.

Post: Mostly publications.

**Headteacher 4 - from 8.30 am.**

Admin and seeing schoolkeeper/staff      Discussing attempted break-in,  
organising glazier to come and repair  
windows - organising sanitary  
engineers to investigate problem in  
toilets. ... ..

Seeing Parents:      discussing children leaving early -  
child guidance appointments.

Seeing teacher:      with self-certification form re last  
week's absence.

Photographer:      Organising class group photographs.  
During this time I also took several  
phone calls and had a brief discussion  
with police who came about the  
attempted break-in. Difficult to  
account for this time because so much  
of it was happening at the same time.

Perhaps it could be said that Monday morning has its own characteristics - for example, staff absence - but most days went along in this way, to varying degrees, though rarely was a day perceived by the headteachers as being typical.

The headteachers perceived their job as essentially being concerned with the facilitation of the teaching and learning processes in the school, including curriculum development work. However, data analysis shows that the headteachers were involved in a wide variety of activities many of which depict the job as much more than this and as having no clear boundaries. An example taken from each of the four diaries illustrated this view.

On Monday **Headteacher 1** was involved in an activity which he perceived as two girls reporting to a teacher that

they had been sexually abused by their step-brother.

**Headteacher 1** recorded his time on this activity as lasting for 540 minutes and that it involved his interacting with social services personnel, the police, doctors, school staff and the girls' 'irate' father who threatened **Headteacher 1** to such a degree that back-up police officers had to be sent for. The consequences of a child running home (Tuesday) involved **Headteacher 2** for a good deal of the afternoon - going to the child's home and trying to coax him back to school, trying to contact the boy's mother, etc. On Monday **Headteacher 3** spent over 15% of her time with Education Welfare Officers in dealing with children's welfare problems and work in support of homeless families. On Monday **Headteacher 4** spent time trying to help two parents, who were 'distraught', with their marital problems. Three of these examples also illustrate the emergent unplanned, nature of some of the headteachers' activities - ie. the reported sexual abuse, the boy running home and the distraught parents who had come to the school for help.

The Displays in Appendix 2 and the detailed breakdown of the content of each headteacher's activities in Appendix 3 show that the headteachers were involved with a wide range of people from beyond the school - Educational Psychologists, Education Welfare Officers, Social worker, School Doctors, the Police, Teacher for Travellers' Children, Equipment Officer, Security Officer and others - who sometimes arrived without prior notice, consumed a significant amount of the headteacher's time and, to varying degrees, created work for the headteacher.

Parents' demands and concerns are seen by the headteachers as a normal part of the job, but the entries in the diaries show that parents often arrived expecting to see the headteacher immediately. In her comments on the MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY page on Thursday, **Headteacher 3** pointed out the difficulty in trying to teach a class and be expected to deal with the demands of parents who arrive expecting to 'see the head': 'I do understand their frustrations but it

sure as hell makes life difficult for me'.

10. Headteachers' activities involving teachers and children  
in relation to teaching and learning  
and curriculum development work

Working with the notion of the 16 basic interactional categories of headteachers' activities - set out in Tables 6/5A and 6/5B (above) - data analysis shows that the category of people with whom the headteachers had the most frequent number of contacts was teachers; 14.40% of their time and 96 out of the total 524 activities recorded by headteachers involved teachers. (See Nos. 6, 7 and 8 above.) It must be remembered that throughout the period of data collection (October 1986 to July 1987) the four schools were, to a small, but varying, degree, affected by teachers' industrial action. Chapter Four gives the details of this as pertinent to each of the four schools, but generally the industrial action was limited to no after school staff meetings and not covering for absent colleagues beyond the first day. Activities which the headteachers recorded as involving children totalled 55 out of the total 524, which amounted to 12.01% of the headteachers' working time. (See Nos. 6, 7 and 8 above.)

In the reflective interviews the four headteachers stressed the essentials of their job as being to do with the facilitation of the teaching and learning processes in the school and an expertise and knowledge of curriculum development, classroom practice and developments in primary education. The headteachers' chief source of satisfaction was, as **Headteacher 1** put it, seeing 'the learning development that takes place'. Considering the centrality of teaching and learning in the headteachers' perceptions of their job, their contact with teachers and children, as recorded in the diaries, raises the following issue.

Though contacts with teachers were relatively frequent, the content of these activities - set out in

Appendix 3 - shows that in fact curriculum development and pedagogical matters do not have a high rating. General organisation and routine school matters represent the highest number of activities involving teachers: 28 out of a total of 96 activities recorded as involving teachers.

Activities which related directly to curriculum matters and classroom practice involving individual teachers numbered 4. There were two staff meetings (in school time) and 1 group/team meeting (in school time) which involved some discussion of curriculum matters. The 3 activities categorised in Appendix 3 as in-set and staff development matters were to do with the curriculum.

Appendix 3 shows that the headteachers recorded 55 activities that involved contact with children. The most frequent of these activities were 15 instances of the headteacher teaching for a given period of time as a planned activity. (The second most frequent was 10 activities to do with 'bad behaviour'.) Only **Headteacher 3** took a class for a whole day as a regular planned activity, and she recorded this as four activities since she did other jobs during the breaks as well as lunch supervision. The headteachers recorded themselves as visiting classes to see children's work on 3 occasions and saw individual children with good work on 4 occasions. **Headteacher 1** assisted with an educational outing and **Headteacher 3** observed a lesson.

It is suggested that with such a relatively small number of activities involving teachers and children in activities which could be said to have had a direct bearing on teaching and learning (including curriculum development) - ie. 34 out of a total of 524 activities - this central aspect of the primary school headteacher's job appears to be difficult to achieve. **Headteacher 4** gave an illustration of this difficulty in her reflective interview. Helping staff to develop professionally and to grow in confidence was cited by **Headteacher 4** as one of the aspects of the job which she particularly enjoys. However, she pointed out

that the fact that her colleagues are generally teaching and therefore only available for short periods during the day inhibits working with teachers.

This finding of the relatively small number of headteachers' activities directly involving teaching and learning (and curriculum development work) is in contrast to Coulson's (1986), page 7 statement that 'the teaching and curriculum aspects of the primary headteacher's work normally look larger in their scale of priorities than they do in the work of secondary school headteachers. However, Coulson does not provide any quantification.

Headteachers' comments in addition to  
naming and describing activities

The use of the diary data is not exhaustive, particularly the headteachers' comments discussed briefly in this section of the present chapter.

In addition to naming and describing the activities they carried out, the four headteachers were asked to record any thoughts, feelings or explanations that they might have about a particular activity. The headteachers' diary entries do not always include any such additional comments, but those comments that are given can be categorised into three crude categories common to all four diaries as follows:

1) Contexting an activity or activities, where no personal feelings or attitude are expressed. This category gives additional information in relation to the activity named, or information about the outcome of an activity or gives some kind of commentary about what was happening, or had happened, in the school which was not necessarily related to an activity.

2) Personal comments (feelings, attitudes, etc.) beyond contexting. The comments in this category were sometimes expressions of satisfaction about the outcome of an activity or satisfaction with particular members of staff or children. But more generally the comments indicated dissatisfaction, sometimes to the point of frustration and anger, which the diary entries (and interview data) suggest stemmed from coping with the many variables that are inherent in the job which are beyond the control of the individual headteacher. Some of these variables came to light in the reflective interviews discussed in Chapter Four, and the most common one recorded in the diaries by all four headteachers is the retaining of present teachers, the recruitment of new teachers and industrial action by the teachers' unions. Also, the category includes the kinds of satisfactions, dissatisfactions and frustrations that could be said to be common to most managerial jobs.

3) Comments addressed directly to the headteacher/researcher (i) by name, (ii) as the researcher - ie. about the diary, and (iii) as a fellow headteacher. These comments were (i) jokes and asides; (ii) explanations about the completion of the diary - difficulty from having left glasses at home, difficulty in accounting for time, the accuracy of an aspect of the diary, etc.; and (iii) sharing collegueship with such comments as 'Well you can imagine can't you'. This third category contains much the smallest number of comments.

While these additional comments helped in the identification and ordering of headteachers' activities, no systematic use has been made of them in the investigation. They feature in Chapter Seven where the headteachers' job descriptions and diaries are discussed from the point of view of (a) their being in the form of written discourse and (b) the question of their subjectivity.



However, the comments and responses to the job which the four headteachers recorded on the MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY pages of the diary do add to the illumination of the headteacher's workload as already depicted by the analysis of the 524 activities which the headteachers recorded themselves as having carried out.

#### The MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY pages of the diary

The MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY pages of the diary aimed to collect something of the headteachers' responses to each day's work by asking them to record what they considered to have been the most noteworthy achievement, problem or situation of the day. The headteachers were asked to say whether the outcome of the event named was satisfactory or unsatisfactory. If the outcome was unsatisfactory the headteachers were asked if they could say why, and to suggest what might have been needed to secure a more satisfactory outcome.

The headteachers' responses to the task were generally briefer than it was hoped they would be and are set out below in a summarised form.

#### MAIN EVENT

#### OUTCOME

#### **Headteacher 1**

Mon. Smoothish running of the school with 3 teachers, 1 Nursery Nurse and the Secretary absent.	Most satisfactory outcome. ( ... 'but at what price?')
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Tue. Implications of the school being over-subscribed.	Unsatisfactory outcome. (Headteacher 1 felt that administrating the local authority's admissions policy creates a lot of extra work which should be carried out by the Authority's office staff.)
Wed. Nil response.	
Thu. Nil response.	
Fri. Nil response.	

#### Headteacher 2

Mon. Completing return for 'Section 11' funding.	Very satisfactory outcome.
Tue. Visit of Swedish educationalist. Child ran home.	Very satisfactory outcome.  Satisfactory outcome.
Wed. Visit of Educational Psychologist and administrative work on cases of children with special educational needs.	Satisfactory outcome.
Thu. End of term staff party. Securing enough teachers for the school to function normally next term.	Satisfactory outcome. Satisfactory outcome.

Fri.	Teacher wishing to resign	Satisfactory outcome. (teacher withdrew resignation.)
------	---------------------------	--

**Headteacher 3**

Mon.	Session with Educational Welfare Officer - starting process of help for children and their families	Satisfactory outcome.
Tue.	Discussion session with group of parents on parental involvement Attending in-set for experienced teachers	Very satisfactory outcome.  Satisfactory outcome.
Wed.	Having to exclude a class of five year olds because of a teacher's absence and teachers' industrial action 'one day no cover'.	Unsatisfactory outcome.
Thu.	Teaching a class and being interrupted because of headteacher demands.	Neither satisfactory nor unsatisfactory outcome.
Fri.	Utter confusion caused by a group of parents trying to produce a termly magazine.	Unsatisfactory outcome. (Outcome was seen by <b>Headteacher 3</b> as beyond her control.)

#### Headteacher 4

- |      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
| Mon. | 'Trying to do marriage guidance in Bengali'   | Unsatisfactory outcome.<br>(Though <b>Headteacher 4</b> referred the parents to the Family Centre, and there was a later satisfactory outcome.) |
| Tue. | No main event - it's all just gelled into an appalling amorphous swamp'. Problems in recruiting a teacher and the new deputy head not being able to join the school because of there being no replacement teacher for his present school. | Unsatisfactory outcome.<br>(Solutions seen as beyond <b>Headteacher 4's</b> control.)   |
| Wed. | No main event - 'moderately calm and singularly uneventful' day.  | Satisfactory outcome.   |
| Thu. | Discussions about the probability of a class having to be excluded because of there being no replacement for a teacher who is leaving.  | Unsatisfactory outcome.<br>(Solution seen as beyond <b>Headteacher 4's</b> control.)  |
| Fri. | Visit of Security Officer and his help in providing secure storage for computer.  | Satisfactory outcome.   |

The headteachers' writing in the MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY page is in a personal style, which is due to the format of the page in that it encourages the use of continuous prose. (The format of the diary page and the nature of the writing task probably encouraged headteachers to, in the main, use an abbreviated note-making style of writing.) The implications of the style of the headteachers' writing and the question of the subjectivity of what they wrote are discussed in Chapter Seven.

The four headteachers named 20 noteworthy events; 13 had a satisfactory outcome, 6 had an unsatisfactory outcome, and one had neither a satisfactory nor an unsatisfactory outcome.

Although the majority of the noteworthy events named by the headteachers were said to have had a satisfactory outcome, the diary entries relating to them indicate that the activities which constituted the noteworthy events were often difficult and time-consuming. **Headteacher 1** actually wrote on Monday, 'In the light of it all this outcome was most satisfactory, but at what price?' and **Headteacher 2** saw the satisfactory outcome of his having completed the return for Section 11 funding as 'a difficult birth'. **Headteacher 2** felt that there was a satisfactory outcome to the boy having run home on Tuesday but saw the activities it entailed as a 'great waste of my time'.

The 20 noteworthy events named by the headteachers represent a wide range of tasks and responsibilities and can be said, in the light of the diary data analysis, to be typical of the headteacher's workload. In fact, after an unsatisfactory day which **Headteacher 4** described as 'an appalling amorphous swamp', she wrote 'I think for an idea of the stresses of headship today is a good day to look at!'

Many of the comments made by the headteachers in this section of the diary could be said to be of a personal nature. **Headteacher 1**, though he only completed two MAIN

EVENT OF THE DAY pages, began on Monday by pointing out that 'This record is incomplete - it does not include the dozens of exchanges which take place with children, parents, staff, etc.'. This statement could be taken as meaning that the job is more difficult and more complex than his diary entries might lead the reader to believe. **Headteacher 1's** other comments are (Monday) a statement that indicates to the reader that the school ran well in spite of staffing difficulties due to absence, and (Tuesday) that the result of the school being popular is that it is over subscribed which causes a lot of administrative work for the headteacher.

**Headteacher 2's** personal comments give the impression that each noteworthy event named was part of the coherent whole - part of the whole school's purposes - being accomplished. The difficult Section 11 form completed - 'I no longer feel guilty'; the feeling of satisfaction with the school after the Swedish educationalist's visit; the mother of the boy who ran home on Tuesday being supportive towards the school was seen as noteworthy; the session with the Educational Psychologist on Wednesday was long but 'it was worth it as we got a lot of work done'; the staff party on Thursday being a success; staffing problems being over after a very difficult term of teacher shortages; and on Friday **Headteacher 2** came back from a week's enjoyable school journey and was 'not in the right mood for school'.

**Headteacher 3** discloses that she worries about such things as having to exclude a class from school, and openly admits that she tries to cope with too many problems at the same time - which causes her migraine. On Thursday **Headteacher 3** found it frustrating to be interrupted in her day's teaching by demands for her time in her role as headteacher.

**Headteacher 4** felt quite helpless about not being able to recruit a teacher. In fact, because of the frustrations and endless difficulties surrounding (1) the

situation of not being able to find a teacher and (2) the problem of her new deputy head not being able to come to school as hoped because of there being no replacement teacher for him at his present school, **Headteacher 4** went home at 2.45 pm. on Tuesday. In her diary she wrote, 'I felt that the day was just going from bad to worse - felt utterly drained'; **Headteacher 4** had been at school until 10.00 pm. the previous evening.

The comments on these pages of the diaries demonstrate something of the four headteachers' individual responses to the job as it occurs in everyday practice. The noteworthy events named and the responses of the headteachers show something of the personal aspect of the job: the headteacher being the 'end of the line' in most situations and often having to make on the spot decisions and deal with emergent tasks and problems. Much of the latter is seen as occurring because, in a primary school, the headteacher is generally the only person with discretionary time and people tend to want to see 'the head'. The nature of some of the noteworthy events named indicate that there were variables in the headteachers' workload over which he or she had little or no influence, for example teachers' industrial action and the difficulty of recruiting teachers.

### Summary and conclusions.

The diaries do not record every small activity and social interaction that the headteachers were involved in during the five days for which they kept the diary. The diaries record what the headteachers felt was significant in their attempts to provide as precise a record as possible, and all four headteachers agreed that their diary was a fairly accurate account. The headteachers pointed out that to have gone into greater detail would have made the diary unworkable without it obstructing the day's work and making unreasonable demands on them.

The diary data demonstrates the complexity of the primary school headteachers' workload and identify in depth the unique features of four instances of headship as perceived and recorded by the headteachers themselves.

The Tables and Appendices show that there was a marked similarity in the four headteachers' perceptions of their activities, but data analysis shows the job to be a broad one and its actual content is viewed as being largely generated from the individual headteacher's interpretation of the job in relation to situational factors inherent in the particular school and its needs.

The main features of the headteacher's workload, as interpreted from the headteachers' perceptions, emerged as:

- 1.) The job (as depicted by the activities the four headteachers recorded and what they said and wrote) is multi-dimensional and has a relatively large workload, which results in it being demanding, complex and at times ambiguous. The average working day for the four headteachers was 8 hours and 58 minutes, with very few breaks.
- 2) The job can be seen to have a particular personal nature which stems from the headteacher having to interpret a complex job which does not have easily quantifiable outcomes or clearly definable boundaries. See (6) below.



- 3) The job consists of a wide range of tasks and responsibilities, and the four headteachers recorded their activities as ranging from 2 to 540 minutes in duration.
- 4) Data analysis suggests that the job has little planned structure.
- 5) Data analysis shows that the job is predominately people-orientated
- 6) Many of the activities that the four headteachers recorded appear to have been emergent rather than planned, and many activities occurred simultaneously. Both of these inter-related features, and the relatively large workload, implicitly suggest that much of the job is fragmented and that the individual headteacher was often in the position of having to react and also of having to select and prioritise between activities.
- 7) The four headteachers rarely described a day as typical, and it is possible that headteachers view each day as a day unto itself and this constitutes the typicality of the headteacher's everyday workload.
- 8) A relatively small number of activities recorded by the headteachers - 34 out of a total of 524 - were activities with teachers and children that could be said to have had a direct bearing on the teaching and learning processes (including curriculum development work) in the school.
- 9) Data analysis (Table 6/5B and Appendix 3) shows that the majority of the headteachers' time was spent on Headteacher's routine activities (eg. assembly, lunch supervision, visiting classes, etc.): organisation and routine school matters (including children's bad behaviour); telephoning; and administration and office work: all of which overwhelmingly involved teachers, children, support staff and others, except in the case of administration and office work which were carried out alone.

The four headteachers recorded themselves as having carried out 524 activities during the 5 days for which they completed the diary.

Data analysis shows that the four headteachers spent on average only 16.98% of their time working alone; 1.72% of it spent 'off site' (at the local education authority's office, shopping, taking car to garage, on an in-service

course, visiting neighbouring school and going out to lunch with fellow headteacher); 12.98% of their time was spent using the telephone; and 68.32% of it working with other people (adults and children).

The headteachers' perceptions of the content of the job - ie. the activities they named and the comments they wrote - show the job as being at the centre of a complex network of social interactions, expectations, etc. which in data analysis were differentiated into sixteen categories according to their interactional, or non-interactional, nature. The 20 displays in Appendix 2 illustrate each of the four headteacher's five days in terms of the sixteen social interaction categories.

Tables 6/5A and 6/5B show the frequency and duration of the headteachers' activities. Appendix 3 provides a detailed break-down of the content of each headteacher's total activities for the five days compared across the four headteachers.

In terms of frequency the six most common categories of activity which the four headteachers were concerned with were: Teachers 18.32% of all activities; Headteacher's routine activities (assembly, lunch supervision, etc.) 14.12%; Telephoning 12.98%; Administration and office work (alone) 12.60%; Support staff 11.26%; and Children 10.50%. With 20.22% of total working time taken up with other categories of activity as shown in Table 6/5a.

However, in terms of duration the six most common categories were: Headteacher's routine activities 14.54% of total working time; Teacher 14.40%; Children 12.01%; Administration and office work 11.12%; Telephone 7.44% and Parents 6.83%. Which left 33.66% of total working time spent on other categories of activity - see Table 6/5B.

The 524 activities which the four headteachers named and the comments that they made at various points in the diary, present their perceptions of their everyday workload as being multi-dimensional. Data analysis suggests that the job as depicted by the headteachers often consists of unplanned activities, and that it inherently at times carries the problem of having to deal with several tasks at once which can necessitate the headteacher having to make instant decisions and to select and to prioritise between the tasks which demand attention. Thus unanticipated issues and the ways in which they affect the everyday workload appear to the headteachers as an accepted aspect of the job.

From the wide variety of activities recorded by the headteachers which do not have a direct bearing on the facilitation of the teaching and learning processes within the school, the many different types of people which the diaries show the headteachers as having been involved with, and because of the unpredictability mentioned above, it can be said that the headteacher's everyday workload has little planned structure and that it does not have clear boundaries. For example, only 34 out of a total of 524 activities recorded by the headteachers could be said to have had a direct bearing on what the four headteachers perceived as the essential aspect of their job, namely the facilitation of the teaching and learning processes in the school, including curriculum development work.

Data analysis supports the theoretical proposition that the headteacher is at the centre of a complex network of responsibilities, expectations, needs, unanticipated issues, etc. This centrality of the job within the school's overall functioning, it is suggested, results from headteacher behaviour which occurs on two levels.

At a practical level the headteacher of a primary school (of the size of the schools used in the present investigation) is generally the person who co-ordinates a great deal of the school's activities and very often he or

she is the only person with discretionary time. This, plus the fact that the headteacher has ultimate authority and responsibility, consequently results in visitors and parents wanting to see 'the head'. For these reasons, tasks and demands present themselves to the headteacher, which result in the fragmentation and unanticipated activities that data suggest are an inherent part of the headteacher's everyday workload.

At a theoretical level, it is proposed that the primary school headteacher is the only person in a position to create an overview of the school's aims and functioning, and that this is implicitly communicated and translated into everyday headship behaviour by the headteacher constantly generating, maintaining and moving forward - via a wide range of everyday activities - the values and objectives which underpin that overview. Certainly what the four headteachers said in the reflective interviews and their comments in the diaries support the proposition.

Primary school headship could, from the above proposition (which is supported by data findings) be viewed, as Coulson (1986) suggests, as the 'processes of personal influence'.

The complexity and some of the other features of the four instances of primary school headship identified in the present chapter, and supported by the findings from the four reflective interviews, can be said to have much in common with the workload of managers generally. For example, Mintzberg (1973, page 171) who studied the nature of managerial work, states:

'The Manager's activities are characterised by brevity, variety and fragmentation. The vast majority are of brief duration, on the order of seconds for foremen and minutes for chief executives. A great variety of activities are performed, but with no obvious patterns. The trivial are interspersed with the consequential so that the manager must shift moods quickly and frequently. There is great fragmentation of work,

and interruptions are commonplace. The characteristics of brevity and fragmentation, apparently present in virtually all managers' jobs, are most pronounced for those who are closest to the 'action' - top managers of small organisations, managers at lower working levels in the hierarchy, particularly in production jobs, and managers working in the most dynamic environments. ... ..

The manager's work is essentially that of communication and his tools are the five basic media - mail, telephone, unscheduled meetings, scheduled meetings and tours.'

In their study of secondary school headteachers Hall, Mackay and Morgan (1986, page 205) found the general features of the job of secondary school headship to be its fragmentation, its people-intensive character and the varied range of tasks which the headteachers carried out:

'Our single day observations of fifteen heads showed their daily work to be fragmented, people-intensive and to encompass a range of tasks. Teaching emerged as the longest sustained activity for many headteachers and formal scheduled meetings constituted a low proportion of the job. The majority of the heads' activities were interpersonal, predominantly with individuals and groups within the school, although they gave vastly different emphases to the importance of building and maintaining their levels of involvement in the tasks to be carried out as a result of their contrasting interpretations of the head's role.'

It is interesting to note Hall et al's observation that the fifteen secondary school headteachers had contrasting interpretations of the headteachers' role. This observation is pertinent to the present investigation by way of its third theoretical proposition (set out in Chapter Three) and discussed in Chapter Nine.

In his observations of the principal of an elementary school in Oregon, U.S.A. - a descriptive case study, (Wolcott 1973, page 89) - Wolcott depicts the principal's daily inter-personal activities as very much being in line with the notion of 'processes of personal influence' suggested above in relation to the primary school headteacher's daily workload.

'The greatest part of the principal's time is spent in an almost endless series of encounters, from the moment he arrives at school until the moment he leaves. Most of these encounters are face-to-face, tending to keep the principalship a highly personal role. ... ..

During my observations at school I faced the problem of attempting to sort out the multifarious circumstances under which Ed conducted school business, for sometimes in the course of a few moments he had engaged in a series of brief dialogues with several people or had discussed a varied set of topics with one person ranging from personal concern for a sick family member to next year's teaching assignment.'

## CHAPTER SEVEN

The headteachers' job descriptions and diaries as written discourse: evaluation of the diary as the investigation's principal research instrument.

Some methodological issues underpinning the use of the diary as a research instrument.

Analysis of the diary data in Chapter Six was concerned principally with the identification and study of the (524) discernible activities which the four headteachers recorded themselves as having carried out in the course of five working days.

As was discussed in Chapter Six, the four headteachers felt that the diary was a fairly accurate account, and that it would not have been possible to have gone into any more detail without obstructing the day's work and thereby creating an artificial situation. There was a similarity across the four headteachers in their use of categories and descriptions to describe their activities. The headteachers' diary entries indicated (in a simple or compound way) separate discernible activities, and throughout the investigation analysis of diary data retains, basically, the categories and descriptions used by the headteachers when completing the diary.

The diaries completed by the four headteachers do not record, nor was it ever envisaged that they could record, every small activity and social interaction that the headteachers were involved in during the course of the five working days. The diaries record what the headteachers regard<sup>ed</sup> as significant in their attempts to provide a detailed record of precisely what they did on the five working days. The richness of the diary data demonstrates that - as the investigation's principal research instrument

- the diary was able to capture uncontrolled variables, subtleties and complexities which findings show to permeate the headteacher's workload. In this respect the diary data portray a complex reality and identify in depth the unique features of four instances of primary school headship 'in action' as perceived and recorded by the headteachers' themselves. It is felt, therefore, that the specially designed diary proved to be an effective and useful instrument for investigating the four headteachers' perceptions of the content of their workload.

The activities which the four headteachers named in their diaries are situated within timed entries, as illustrated in Chapter Six. In addition to naming and describing 524 activities, the headteachers' timed entries sometimes include additional information - thoughts, feelings and explanations which they had about a particular activity and comments of a general nature. The design of the diary page encouraged the headteachers to provide this additional subjective information (i.e. in the CONTENT and COMMENTS columns - see the instructional notes at the beginning of the diary, Appendix 1).

Similarly, the purpose of the MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY and GENERAL COMMENTS pages was to collect headteachers' perceptions and responses beyond merely naming and describing activities. (See Chapter Six)

There are important methodological implications underpinning any examination of the information which the diaries and job descriptions contain. These implications stem from the fact that the diaries and job descriptions are in the medium of written language and that this mediates the data in specific ways, as discussed below.

The written language in the documents does not reflect or mirror actions, events and situations pre-existing in the headteachers' everyday world; rather the



written language facilitates the individual headteacher's reflective construction of his or her version of what happened and his or her responses (thoughts, feelings, explanations, etc.) to what happened (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). This sociological perspective is linked to what Blumer (1967) cites as the three simple premises of symbolic interactionism:

1. Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.
2. The meaning of things is derived from, or arises out of, social interaction.
3. Meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he or she encounters.

In the present Chapter analysis is concerned with what the headteachers' written discourse might yield beyond the naming and describing of activities. More specifically, analysis seeks to explore the subjective, personal, nature of the job in everyday practice as demonstrated in the headteachers' writing.

However, the fact that the headteachers' descriptions and responses are in the medium of written discourse raises three important and inter-related methodological issues:-

1. The written language mediates the data.
2. Each headteacher's writing carries, implicitly and explicitly, personal values, attitudes and judgements which help determine his or her perceptions of the job.
3. The individual headteacher's attitude towards the writing task and sense of audience must shape the

content and style of his or her written discourse and the degree of personal disclosure.

A fundamental question to be asked of the headteachers' writing is: Is it in fact subjective and does it demonstrate the involvement of self? Or is the writing objective, detached, with little or no personal disclosure demonstrated?

Implications of the diary written 'in action' or by other means.

One important way in which the written language of the diary and the job descriptions mediates the data is the question of 'how' and 'when' the documents were completed. Such mediation is to do with the individual headteacher's style of writing, the contextual factors which helped promote the given style and his or her attitude towards the task and towards the audience who may, to the writer's mind, read the document. These factors influence the degree of personal disclosure or detachment demonstrated in the headteacher's written discourse.

The GENERAL COMMENTS page of the diary and a questionnaire (containing four open-ended questions) completed after the diary had been filled in reveal that each of the four headteachers had their own method of filling in the diary. These different methods have implications for the analysis of the diary data and raise two basic questions:

Was the diary written 'in action', necessitating immediate written responses with implications similar to those for speaking which is 'done on the fly'? Or was it written by some other means which gave opportunities for reflection, editing, elaboration and a more explicit use of words that are features of the writing process?

**Headteacher 1** kept a record of his activities and comments in his own large paged diary and copied these into the diary at the end of the day - or the following day - sometimes adding information.

**Headteacher 2** wrote up his diary as events occurred on Monday. But on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday he used photocopied pages of the diary to write his record in rough as events occurred, then copied the information into the actual diary at home, making few alterations or additions. This method was adopted because on Monday **Headteacher 2** found filling in the diary legibly as events occurred too burdensome.

**Headteacher 3.** The majority of the entries were filled in as events occurred, though at times the demands of the day prevented this and there was a delay in writing up the diary. On Friday **Headteacher 3** left her glasses at home and found it difficult to fill in the diary. After the first five entries she wrote the remainder of her entries on paper and filled in the diary at home, making no additions.

**Headteacher 4** began by trying to fill in the diary as events occurred but found this difficult. She then scribbled brief words in the diary as things occurred and filled in the additional information at the end of the day.

Exploration of the use of first person pronouns as a possible indicator of personal involvement as demonstrated in headteachers' written discourse

Chafe and Danielwicz (1987) demonstrate different kinds of personal involvement and detachment in written and spoken discourse (i.e. with audience, with self and with concrete reality) by the use of linguistic features indicating the communicator's degree of self involvement. The following analysis of the four headteachers' writing is based on the work of Chafe and Danielwicz.

The three inter-related methodological issues set out above gave rise to the construction of the following typology of four different types of headteacher (Table 7/1 below), depending on the level of involvement or detachment of self in their perceptions of the job as demonstrated in their writing.

Typology of involvement and detachment of self in headteachers' written discourse about their job.

Type AA Headteacher

Very personally involved in the job and this personal involvement is depicted, exploited, in the writing of the job description and the diary.

Involvement is demonstrated in headteacher's writing

Type AB Headteacher

Very personally involved in the job but does not depict or exploit this involvement in the writing of the job description and the diary. Writing is detached, not personal.

Involvement is not demonstrated in the headteacher's writing.

Type BA Headteacher

Not involved in the job (i.e. detached) but exploits the job description and the diary writing to indicate that he or she is involved in the job.

Headteacher's writing demonstrates involvement.

Type BB Headteacher

Not very involved in the job (i.e. detached). This detachment is depicted in the writing of the job description and the diary.

Involvement is not demonstrated in the headteacher's writing.

In the exploration of whether or not the headteachers' written discourse demonstrates personal involvement or detachment, the measure used to identify involvement is the linguistic indicator of the use of first person pronouns (after Chafe and Danielwicz):

I    me    my    mine    myself    we    us    our    ours

In one instance **Headteacher 4** named herself by first name - in her job description.

Table 7/2 (below) shows the use of first person pronouns (plus one instance of naming self - **Headteacher 4's** job description) expressed as a percentage of the total words used in three types of headteachers' writing:

Job description; CONTENT & COMMENTS columns of the diary page; and MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY page of the diary.

TABLE 7/2

Use of first person pronouns (I me my mine myself we us our ours, plus one instance of naming self - Headteacher 4's job description) as a percentage of the total words used by headteachers in three types of written discourse about their jobs.

	Job description	CONTENT and COMMENTS, Columns of diary page	MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY Page of diary	Average for the three types of written discourse
Headteacher 1	First person pronouns 3	29	1	
	Total words 140	1794	90	
	2.14%	1.61%	1.11%	1.62%
Headteacher 2	First person pronouns 4	191	19	
	Total words 493	3,527	325	
	0.81%	5.41%	5.84%	4.02%
Headteacher 3	First person pronouns 13	35	20	
	Total words 483	1,471	405	
	2.69%	2.37%	4.93%	3.33%
Headteacher 4	First person pronouns 72	64	26	
	Total words 910	1,767	449	
	7.91%	3.62%	5.79%	5.77%
	(inc. one instance of naming self			

Chafe and Danielwicz's study is concerned with the language used by speakers and writers in differing situations (i.e. casual conversations, lectures, informal letters and academic papers), and the linguistic differences and similarities involved. Chafe and Danielwicz (page 10) identify clause-like units of language which they call Intonation Units, and these Units figure in their system for the measurement of the use of the various linguistic features which the writers explore.

The Intonation Unit is not used as a measure in the present investigation because:

- (a) It is seen as too complex a linguistic phenomenon for use within the scope of the present investigation.
- (b) The writing in the headteachers' diaries and job descriptions does not yield a single and continuous style of writing (as did the informal letters and academic papers used by Chafe and Danielwicz) and therefore it would not be possible to apply the measure consistently. (See discussion below.

Therefore, for the purpose of the present investigation it was found adequate to use the simple formula of expressing the number of first person pronouns used by the headteachers as a percentage of the total number of words they use.

Implications of style of writing in relation to the indicator used and its value as a measure of personal involvement.

Table 7/2 (above) shows no regularities or patterns in the percentage figures beyond the following arrangement of the figures in order of the highest use of first person pronouns for each of the three types of written discourse.



Job Description: H/t 4 = 7.97% | H/t 3 = 2.69% | H/t 1 = 2.14% | H/t 2 = 0.18%

CONTENT and COMMENTS columns: H/t 2 = 5.14% | H/t 4 = 3.62% | H/t 3 = 2.37% | H/t 1 = 1.61%

MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY page: H/t 2 = 5.84% | H/t 4 = 5.79% | H/t 3 = 4.93% | H/t 1 = 1.11%

The above arrangement of the percentage figures shows that in the writing of the CONTENT and COMMENTS columns and the MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY page the four headteachers' ranking, from the highest to the lowest percentage of first pronouns used, forms a common pattern across the two types of writing. **Headteachers 2** used the highest percentage of first person pronouns for both types of writing, followed by **Headteachers 4, 3 and 1** in descending order. Had **Headteacher 2** used a significantly higher number of first person pronouns in his written job description, or had **Headteacher 4** used significantly less, there could have been a common pattern of frequency for the use of first person pronouns across the three types of writing.

The difference in the number of first person pronouns used by **Headteacher 4** and **Headteacher 2** in the writing of their job descriptions highlights the implications of the inter-related methodological issues set out above. **Headteacher 2** provided a detailed written description of the content of his job in the form of a list of tasks and concerns, and also listed some goals, achievements, difficulties, satisfactions and dissatisfactions. The job description is reproduced in full in Chapter Four. **Headteacher 2's** style of writing is formal

note-making, which results in the use of only four first person pronouns for a total of 493 words. On the other hand, **Headteacher 4**'s written job description contains 910 words and though it includes some formal listing of tasks and concerns, it is largely written in continuous prose and is a personal document with a high degree of personal disclosure. There are several examples of personal disclosure from **Headteacher 4**'s job description reproduced in the reflective account in Chapter Four. The example given below serves as a further illustration:

"Also I find it so hard to take myself seriously as a grown up headteacher person (I'm practising to be a senile delinquent) so it makes me giggle a bit when things I say are treated as if they were issued on tablets of stone.'

Implied use of first person pronouns in  
Headteachers' writing as compared with the actual use of  
first person pronouns.

Further examination of the data shows that involvement is sometimes implied in the four headteachers' writing in instances where the use of the verb infers a personal pronoun omission.

Example 1:

<b>Headteacher 3,</b>	'Spoke to secretary about day's
Monday 9.50 a.m.	duties made arrangements for
	meals supervision.'

In the above example **Headteacher 3** is writing in abbreviated note-making form in which abbreviation is the omission of the personal pronouns before the verbs 'spoke' and 'made'.

Example 2:

<b>Headteacher 3,</b>	'Just heard that one of the teachers
Wednesday, 11.05 a.m.	away will not be back. ... ..
	Finally decided to exclude
	class.'

In the second example the abbreviated note-making form of **Headteacher 3's** writing has resulted in the omission of 'I have' before the adverb 'Just' at the beginning of the example, and the omission of the personal pronoun before the adverb 'Finally'.

In the light of there being a varying but significant number of instances in the four headteachers' writing where the use of a first person pronoun is implied, but not actually used, it was decided to re-analyse **Headteacher 3's** diary and job description with the following result, as set out in table 7/3 below.  
(**Headteacher 3's** diary was chosen for re-analysis on a random basis.)

Doubtful value of the use of first person pronouns as an indicator of personal involvement as demonstrated in headteachers' written discourse.

The findings displayed in Table 7/3 (below) throw some doubt on the value of measuring involvement and detachment in the headteachers' written discourse through the use of first person pronouns as a linguistic indicator of personal involvement. Chafe and Danielwicz used the indicator in a project which compared four kinds of language used by twenty adults, who were either professors or graduate students. The four kinds of language collected from each of the twenty respondents were: samples of conversations taken at an informal gathering; samples taken from relatively informal lectures given by the twenty respondents; samples of written language taken from informal letters to relatives, friends or colleagues of the

respondents; and samples of each of the respondents' academic writings.

The diary used in the present investigation and the four job descriptions written by the headteachers do not yield a single type of language use for each of the two kinds of written discourse examined, as was the case in Chafe and Danielwicz's two types of writing - i.e. informal letters and academic writing. Rather, the writing in the four diaries and the job descriptions demonstrates a complex mixture of styles of writing ranging from abbreviated note-making to the use of continuous prose. This complexity of the findings, therefore, makes it difficult to apply Chafe and Danielwicz's notion of the use of first person pronouns as an indicator of involvement and detachment.

The figures in Table 7/3 show that **Headteacher 3** used almost twice as many **implied** first person pronouns as she used **actual** first person pronouns when writing the **CONTENT** and **COMMENTS** columns of the diary page. In writing the job description and the **MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY** page of the diary, **Headteacher 3** used relatively more first person pronouns than she did implied pronouns because she was writing in continuous prose. These differences in the use of first person pronouns and the implied use of first person pronouns can be explained by **Headteacher 3's** use of an abbreviated note-making style of writing when writing the **CONTENT** and **COMMENTS** columns of the diary page, where, as discussed above, the abbreviation is the omission of the personal pronoun though its use is clearly inferred.

Table 7/3

Headteacher 3's written discourse re-analysed demonstrates a comparison between the use of first person pronouns and the implied use of first person pronouns across three types of writing.

	Job description	CONTENT and COMMENTS columns of diary page	MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY page of diary	Average for the three types of written discourse
Use of personal pronouns as a percentage of total words used.	$\frac{13}{483}$ 2.69%	$\frac{35}{1,471}$ 2.37%	$\frac{20}{405}$ 4.93%	3.33%
Implied use of personal pronouns as percentage of total words used.	$\frac{5}{483}$ 1.03%	$\frac{62}{1,471}$ 4.21%	$\frac{3}{405}$ 0.75%	1.99%
Combined use and implied use of personal pronouns as a percentage of total words used.	$\frac{18}{483}$ 3.72%	$\frac{97}{1,471}$ 6.59%	$\frac{23}{405}$ 5.67%	5.32%

The assumption that the diary would yield subjective data.

The purpose of the diary, as discussed in Chapter Five, was to collect four primary school headteachers' subjective descriptions of, and responses to, the activities which constituted their daily workload on five working days spread over a period of six months.

The diary was seen as the means of promoting what Plummer (1983 - see Chapter Five) describes as a distinctive humanistic research style. A style which aims to achieve a subjective and spontaneous account of what actually happened from the practising headteacher's perspective, together with related comments and explanations; a close-up and detailed picture of four particular instances of primary school headship in action.

The limitations in the use of different kinds of diary format for collecting data, including the one used in the present investigation, are discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

The four-fold typology of headteachers set out in Table 7/1 (above) shows that the diary was open to 'misuse' and 'inaccuracy' (knowingly and unknowingly) by the headteachers, though the fact that the researcher in the present investigation is an 'informed insider' - i.e. a fellow headteacher working in the Borough of Chesley - serves to check, to some degree, the validity of what the four headteachers wrote.

The use of the diary has highlighted some methodological issues which stem from the fact that data have been collected in the form of respondents' written discourse and at the request of the researcher for a known piece of research. The 'personal documents' listed by Plummer (e.g. reports, letters, diaries, life histories, photographs and film) are free from researcher influence in that, generally, they are not produced for a researcher's

use. The diary in the present investigation was produced for the researcher's use and the four headteachers did a great favour in undertaking the task of completing it. However, it must be said that since the respondents were aware of their involvement in a piece of research, the individual headteacher's attitude towards the task of completing the diary, and his or her sense of who might read it, must have shaped the content and style and the degree of 'personal disclosure' and subjectivity.

It is proposed that data collected by means of the diary (and the job descriptions) is not necessarily subjective. The individual headteacher may have chosen to take an objective, detached, stance, as in the case of **Headteacher 1**.

**Headteacher 1** behaved in something of a detached manner by deviating from completing the diary 'properly' for a significant amount of time. He took short-cuts (by sometimes ignoring the use of the columns on the diary page); he wrote some entries out of time sequence on page one of his diary on Monday; he forgot to do the diary one day (an alternative day was added later); and he did not complete the MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY page on three out of the five days. **Headteachers 2, 3 and 4** kept to the use of the headed columns of the diary page for all of their timed entries. **Headteacher 1** did so on Monday. On Tuesday and Thursday he initially used the headed columns then for the rest of those two days and for the whole of Wednesday and Friday he:

- (a) used the TIME and ACTIVITY columns and then wrote across the CONTENT and COMMENTS columns,  
or
- (b) used the TIME column then wrote across the ACTIVITY, CONTENT and COMMENTS columns,  
or
- (c) used a combination of (a) and (b)

### Summary and conclusions

The investigation did not set out to look at any personality variables, yet the differences in writing style and method of completing the diary and job description might be due to individual differences in personality, personal needs and/or attitudinal differences. Or, at a level of greater generalisation, differences in introversionism and extraversionism could have played an important part.

The evidence of the degree of involvement or detachment as demonstrated in the diaries and job descriptions, i.e. using first person pronouns as a linguistic indicator (after Chafe and Danielwicz), yields a complex picture. These complexities make it difficult to apply the linguistic indicator in any systematic way and, therefore, it is not possible to reach any clear conclusions which might add to an understanding of the subjective, personal, nature of the job in everyday practice as demonstrated in the headteachers' writing. An example of the complexity of the data yield is the re-analysis of **Headteachers 3's** diary and job description and the discovery of her **implied** use of first person pronouns.

One of the difficulties in analysing the headteachers' writing is that the four diaries and job descriptions do not yield a single style of language use for each of the three types of writing examined. The three types of the headteachers' writing demonstrate a complex mixture of styles ranging from abbreviated note-making to the use of continuous prose. It would appear that the samples of writing used in Chafe and Danielwicz's study (i.e. informal letters and academic papers) yielded a similar style of writing, or a less complex use of language, for each of the types of written discourse.

The evidence of involvement and detachment in the headteachers' writing is taken to be an indicator of individual differences. These individual differences are



basically seen to be concerned with the individual headteacher's style of writing and the range of contextually generated options which helped to determine the particular style or mixture of styles which he or she actually used. A more detailed investigation of the possible causes and indicators of individual differences is beyond the scope of the present study.

The findings of the present chapter while not arriving at any clear conclusions have brought to light some methodological issues to do with contextual (and personal) factors underpinning the writing of the diaries and job descriptions which in turn question the subjectivity of these data.

Chapter Eight consists of an analysis of the four headteachers' spoken discourse (i.e. data collected via the reflective interviews analysed in Chapter Four) which it is hoped will, because of the differences between the written and spoken data, yield a more positive use of Chafe and Danielwicz's notion of involvement and detachment and the concept of personal disclosure on the part of the headteachers.

Allowing for the possibility of the questionable subjectivity of the diary data, they are seen to portray the complex reality of four instances of primary school headship as it occurred in everyday practice and they identify in depth the unique features of the job as perceived and recorded by the four headteachers. To this end, it is felt that the diary proved to be an effective and useful instrument for investigating the four headteachers' perceptions of their daily workload.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Examination of interview data with reference to the subjectivity of the four headteachers' reflective accounts of their job.

The use of first person pronouns as a linguistic indicator of personal involvement (after Chafe and Danielwicz 1987) - discussed in Chapter Seven - revealed a complex picture with regard to the assumption that the headteachers' diaries and job descriptions would yield subjective data. Because of the complexity of the findings, no clear conclusions could be drawn as to the value of Chafe and Danielwicz's notion of involvement and detachment as demonstrated in the four headteachers' written discourse.

However, the differences in writing style and methods of completing the diary and job descriptions, and the ways in which the written language mediates data, raise some significant methodological issues which could question the subjectivity of the data.

The significance of the issues raised with regard to the examination of the four headteachers' written discourse in Chapter Seven led to the following analysis of their spoken discourse as collected in the audio taped reflective interview with each headteacher. The data from the four long, reflective interviews presents a less complex phenomenon than the data collected via the headteacher's written discourse because of the lack of possibilities for individual differences.

The following analysis aims to explore whether the headteachers perceive their job in an objective, detached way, or whether their spoken discourse demonstrates a more subjective stance which shows involvement and personal disclosure. The analysis makes use of Chafe and Danielwicz's notion of involvement and detachment as a

possible indicator of personal disclosure on the part of the individual headteacher.

### The methodological strengths and virtues of the long interview

The audio-taped interviews with each of the four headteachers lasted between 58 and 71 minutes, and Chapter Four contains a detailed analysis of these reflective accounts of primary school headship as experienced in the four specific instances studied.

One long interview with each of the four headteachers was chosen in order to collect as much data as possible - particularly in view of their willingness to take on the huge task of completing the diary. It was also felt that one long interview, rather than a number of shorter sessions, was necessary in order to gain the respondents' trust in discussing personal and confidential matters, and to achieve the depth of questioning the interview aimed to achieve.

McCracken (1988), page 9 gives an account of the value of the long interview as a data collection instrument:

"The long interview is one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armory. For certain descriptive and analytic purposes, no instrument of inquiry is more revealing. The method can take us into the mental world of the individual, to glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world. It can also take us into the lifeworld of the individual, to see the content and pattern of daily experience. The long interview gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves."

In the above quotation McCracken does not question the subjectivity of data collected via the long interview; subjectivity is assumed.

Procedure for the examination of the headteachers' spoken  
discourse.

The audio taped interviews with the four headteachers were carried out before the issue of the diary, as follows:

**Headteacher 1**

- Interviewed at the school during a normal working day. Short break during the interview (while Headteacher 1 checked playground supervision). Interview lasted 58 minutes.

**Headteacher 2**

- Interviewed at his home during the evening.  
Interview lasted 71 minutes.

**Headteacher 3**

- Interviewed at school during a normal working day, though Headteacher 3 was suffering some discomfort from a back injury. Interview lasted 62 minutes.

**Headteacher 4**

- Interviewed at school, which was closed to children because of a break-down in the heating system. Interview lasted 65 minutes.

The interviews were semi-structured and comparability across the four instances was achieved by the use of an interview guide which consisted of twelve principal open-ended questions, with probes and follow-up questions where necessary. (See Chapter Four for details of the twelve principal questions.)

For the purpose of the present examination of the reflective interview data, it was seen as too large a task and unnecessary to analyse each of the four interviews in

total. Instead, the headteachers' responses to four of the twelve principal questions was thought to be an adequate sample of their spoken discourse. Each of the four principal questions selected actually constitutes an area of questioning, rather than a single question, and are:-

Question No. 4

- Naming any difficulties or dissatisfactions of the job. (Termed Extract A in the following discussion)

Question No. 5

- Naming satisfactions and enjoyable aspects of the job. (Termed Extract B.)

Question No. 11

- Summing up: overall feeling about the job. (Termed Extract C.)

Question No. 12

- Implications of the researcher also being a fellow headteacher and feeling about the interview. (Termed Extract D.)

The four areas of questioning were selected as a fair sample of the four headteachers' spoken discourse in that Extracts A and B occurred well into the interview and Extracts C and D consist of the final 7 to 11 minutes of the session. It was felt that these particular extracts cover a variety of topics within the overall subject matter of primary school headship experience, and Extract D is concerned with the implications of the interview itself.

The extracts were transcribed for the purpose of analysis. Words repeated in hesitations are not counted and contractions (e.g. shouldn't, I've and don't) have been counted as one word. The total number of words used by headteachers in the course of the four extracts from their long interview is follows:

Headteacher 1, 1,367 words Headteacher 2, 1,977 words

Headteacher 3, 1,183 words Headteacher 4, 1,553 words

The interview guide gave comparability across the four interviews and this consequently meant that the headteachers' spoken discourse, being the product of a semi-structured interview, was not open to the possibility of the individual differences and complexities which are a feature of their written discourse which was analysed in Chapter Seven.

Exploration of the value of the notion of involvement and detachment with reference to the four headteachers' spoken discourse and its subjectivity.

Examination of the transcripts of the extracts from the four interviews reveals evidence of the three types of involvement cited by Chafe and Danielwicz as being present in spoken language:

Speaker's involvement with audience.

Speaker's involvement with himself or herself.

Speaker's involvement with the concrete reality of what is being talked about.

The following discussion explores the relevance of these three types of involvement to the headteachers' spoken discourse and its subjectivity.

Chafe and Danielwicz found that written language usually lacks any of these three types of involvement, and generally it shows indications of the writer's detachment from audience, from self, and from concrete reality. However, they state that this does not necessarily divide spoken language from written language since written language can sometimes contain the features of spoken language and vice-versa.

Involvement with audience (i.e. with the headteacher /  
researcher as interviewer).

Chafe and Danielwicz cite two indicators of involvement with audience, 'responses' and use of the phrase 'you know'.

As Table 8/1 (below) shows, the four headteachers did not show involvement with the interviewer beyond the mechanics of negotiating the interview except in extract D (Feeling about the interview). The headteacher's talk which shows involvement with the interviewer by way of the process of negotiating the interview responds to Chafe and Danielwicz's first measure of involvement with audience, namely 'the occurrence of language which responds to something just said by another person'. This kind of talk permeates all the extracts because of the very nature of the interview procedure.

In the process of negotiating the interview, **Headteachers 1** and **3** used first person pronouns in the following phrases:

**Headteacher 1 Extract C:**

'... when we talked about taking the job  
home ...'  
'... we talked earlier in the interview ... ...'  
'I've concentrated there on staff  
relationships.'

**Headteacher 3 Extract D:**

'Sorry I've missed that.'  
'And that takes me back to your first  
question...'

These five first person pronouns used by the two headteachers were not used in talk specifically about the subject matter of the extracts, therefore, they are not included in the count of the first person pronouns which is a feature of the analysis discussed below.

The second indicator of involvement with audience cited by Chafe and Danielwicz is the phrase 'you know' used

by the speaker to reassure himself or herself that he or she is being understood without explicitly seeking confirmation. All four Headteachers used the phrase to differing degrees, as Table 8/1 (below) shows.

The four instances of Extract D all demonstrate involvement with the interviewer personally, making implicit or explicit reference to him in his dual role of fellow headteacher and researcher. This is not surprising since Extract D constitutes an area of questioning that is specifically concerned with (a) the implications of the researcher/interviewer also being a fellow headteacher; (b) the headteachers' feelings about the interview; and (c) the opportunity for the headteachers to erase or alter any part of the audio recorded interview.

The evidence of involvement with the interviewer personally - i.e. as fellow headteacher and researcher - is taken to be indicated by the headteachers' use of second person pronouns, namely 'you', 'your' and 'we'. The headteachers' use of this indicator can be summarised as follows:

**Headteacher 1** used the pronouns 'you' and 'your' (once) to refer directly to the interviewer personally: '...you have gained a more sympathetic response.' and '...I felt that yes, you've been through that one too'. **Headteacher 1** used the phrase 'you know' twice in the four extracts

**Headteacher 2** used the pronoun 'we' twice to refer directly to the interviewer personally: '...we're on the same wavelength' and '...we talk in a kind of shorthand.' **Headteacher 2** used the phrase 'you know' a total of 30 times during the four extracts.

**Headteacher 3** referred directly to the interviewer personally by use of the pronouns 'your' and 'you' twice. For example, '... is your personality' and '... you've



assured me of confidentiality...' **Headteacher 3** used the phrase 'you know' 12 times during the four extracts.

**Headteacher 4** used the pronoun 'you' 7 times and the pronoun 'your' once to refer directly to the interviewer personally. For example, 'I've found it very easy to talk to you' and 'you know what it's like'. **Headteacher 4** used the phrase 'you know' 6 times during the four extracts.

Table 8/1

Headteachers' use of personal pronouns in spoken discourse.

	Extract	Total words used	Total 1st person pronouns used	Second person pronoun 'you'	Involvement with interviewer		
					Use of 'you know'	Personally as fellow Headteacher /researcher	Mechanics of negotiating interview
Headteacher 1	A	290	13	6	1	-	-
	B	160	4	3	-	-	-
	C	593	41	2	1	-	we x 2; I
	D	323	21	1	-	you, your	-
	Total	1,366	79	12	2	2	3
Headteacher 2	A	404	27	2	2	-	-
	B	620	52	-	18	-	-
	C	587	54	-	4	-	-
	D	365	26	5	6	we x 2	-
	Total	1,976	159	7	30	2	-
Headteacher 3	A	313	9	7	5	-	-
	B	191	11	6	1	-	-
	C	347	42	-	1	-	-
	D	332	33	3	5	you x 2, your x 2	I; me
	Total	1,183	95	16	12	4	2
Headteacher 4	A	442	39	1	3	-	-
	B	418	37	5	1	-	-
	C	454	43	-	-	-	-
	D	239	25	2	2	you x 7, your	-
	Total	1,553	144	8	6	8	-

Involvement and detachment with oneself and with concrete reality.

Analysis suggests that involvement and detachment with self and involvement and detachment with the concrete reality of what is being talked about (as the terms are used in the present investigation) are not always distinguishable as two separate entities in the way that they are presented in Chafe and Danielwicz's text.

Chafe and Danielwicz state that there are numerous linguistic indicators of involvement with the concrete reality of what is being talked about. The most frequent indicator is the use of temporal and spatial adverbs and adverbial phrases; these locate the people and the matters being talked about in specific time and space. The following examples taken from the headteachers' talk in the reflective interviews demonstrate the individual headteacher's involvement with the concrete reality of what is being talked about, i.e. his or her primary school headship experience in a specific school at a specific time. Or, as in the case of the fifth example, involvement with the phenomenon of the interview itself. The underlining of the first person pronouns is explained below.

Headteacher 1, Extract A:

'And even with an efficient and committed schoolkeeper, we still require to invest time and effort into sometimes persuading people to do jobs which should be automatically done.'

Headteacher 2, Extract C:

'I feel a lot of satisfaction in as much as I took over a school with a lot of problems ... ..'

Headteacher 3, Extract A:

'There's a parent came into me recently and she's got severe damp and her child is asthmatic ...'

**Headteacher 4, Extract A:**

'They have a copy of my timetable and yet I still get juniors coming to as me for a Pritt stick in the middle of infant assembly.'

**Headteacher 4, Extract D:**

'I've found it very easy to talk to you.'

The above are random samples of the headteacher's talk. As well as serving as examples of the headteachers' involvement with concrete reality they reveal the significance of the individual headteacher's involvement with self as a prerequisite of involvement with the concrete reality of what is being talked about. This important feature of the headteacher's spoken discourse emerges more clearly as analysis progresses and is discussed below.

Chafe and Danielwicz give the use of first person pronouns as an obvious measure of involvement with oneself. Table 8/2 (below) shows the four headteachers' total use of the different first person pronouns which they used in the four extracts.

Table 8/2

The use of first person pronouns by the four headteachers  
in their talk about the subject matter of the extracts

	Total number of words used	Singular				Plural				Total number of first person pronouns used	Total first person pronouns used as a percentage of total number of words used.
		I	me	my	myself	we	us	our	ourselves		
Headteacher 1	1,366	46	2	1	-	24	3	2	1	79	5.78%
Headteacher 2	1,976	131	9	10	2	7	-	-	-	159	8.04%
Headteacher 3	1,183	77	4	6	2	5	-	1	-	95	8.03%
Headteacher 4	1,553	114	17	4	1	8	-	-	-	144	9.27%

Table 8/3

Four headteachers' use of first person pronouns (I, me, my, myself, we, us, our, ourselves) as a percentage of total number of words used in their talk about the subject matter across the four extracts.

	Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4
EXTRACT A				
Pronouns	13	27	9	39
Words	290	404	313	442
Percentage	4.48%	6.68%	2.89%	8.82%
EXTRACT B				
Pronouns	4	52	11	37
Words	160	620	191	418
Percentage	2.50%	8.38%	5.75%	8.85%
EXTRACT C				
Pronouns	41	54	42	43
Words	593	587	347	454
Percentage	6.91%	9.19%	12.10%	9.47%
EXTRACT D				
Pronouns	21	26	33	25
Words	323	365	332	239
Percentage	6.50%	7.12%	9.93%	10.46%
TOTALS				
Pronouns	79	159	95	144
Words	1,366	1,976	1,183	1,553
Percentage	5.78%	8.04%	8.03%	9.27%

As Table 8/2 (above) shows, analysis of the four extracts from each of the four reflective interviews reveals the following use of first person pronouns as a percentage of the total number of words used by headteachers:

**Headteacher 1:** 5.77% of the 1,367 words used were first person pronouns.

**Headteacher 2:** 8.04%                      1,976

**Headteacher 3:** 8.03%                      1,183

**Headteacher 4:** 9.27%                      1,553

Table 8/3 (above) shows the distribution of the use of first person pronouns across the four extracts for each headteacher. It does not reveal any significant patterns or regularities beyond the observations set out below.

**Headteacher 2** and **Headteacher 3** used almost the same percentage of first person pronouns, 8.04% and 8.03% respectively, but in fact **Headteacher 2** used far more words (1,976) than **Headteacher 3** did (1,183). Table 8/3 shows that **Headteacher 2** and **Headteacher 3**'s percentage usage across the four extract have a common pattern; there is a progressive increase from Extract A to Extract C, followed by a decrease in Extract D.

Table 8/3 shows that there are no patterns or regularities in the headteachers' use of first person pronouns across the extracts, except for pattern in **Headteacher 2** and **Headteacher 3**'s percentage usage.

**Headteacher 1** used the least percentage of first person pronouns in the overall four extracts and the least in Extracts B, C and D. However, in Extract A (Difficulties and dissatisfactions) **Headteacher 3** used the least percentage, 2.89%.

In total **Headteacher 4** used the highest percentage of first person pronouns for Extracts A, B and D, but Headteacher 3 used the highest percentage in Extract C.

Examination of the headteachers' use of first person pronouns in their context suggests that involvement with self and involvement with concrete reality generally occur simultaneously. The following examples of headteachers' talk illustrates this proposition:

**Headteacher 1, Extract C:**

'What concerns me is that the impetus that we had, we've not actually lost here but we might not pick it up.'

**Headteacher 1, Extract A:**

'Any difficulties? I think that one is that we, our role is not clearly understood by other agencies and perhaps theirs is not by us too.'

**Headteacher 1, Extract C:**

'I'm not complacent but reasonably satisfied with the development that we've made.'

**Headteacher 2, Extract A:**

'And when I was first a head I had the sort of (um) the great luck to have and exceptional primary inspector, who was an inspiration ... ..'

**Headteacher 2, Extract A:**

'I mean I've never felt more pessimistic 'cause I feel that it's quite likely that the I.L.E.A.'s going to be broken up. I mean I see things now in very hard political terms.'

**Headteacher 2, Extract C:**

'I mean what depresses me is that it could be so much better if we weren't, if we didn't have a teacher shortage and we didn't have all these other pressures.'



Headteacher 3, Extract C:

'And, there are still tensions, but we have parents who have accepted and can see what we're achieving and that makes me feel positive (about) what I've done.'

Headteacher 3, Extract B:

'I enjoy immensely working with children.'

Headteacher 3, Extract D:

'No I don't think you're being that. I think what may have influenced is, if anything has influenced, is your personality, it's very sort an accommodating one.'

Headteacher 4, Extract B:

'I like the variety, I like the challenges. I get bored if I'm not busy and I like unusual situations, having to deal with those.'

Headteacher 4, Extract D:

'I think that I can see advantages in that, as I've said I do feel that it's easier to talk about it knowing that you know what I'm talking about.'

Headteacher 4, Extract B:

'Yes, well, I have encouraged the children to come and see me and they clammer to do it and I have a system of silly stickers which, you know, (when) they do nice work ... ...'

The above examples contain a high degree of personal disclosure and show that the four headteachers perceive their job (i.e. at reflective interview level) in subjective, personal terms as indicated by their frequent use of first person personal pronouns. Such examples of the frequent use of first person pronouns are common in the extracts of spoken discourse examined. Tables 8/1, 8/2 and 8/3 illustrate the specific distribution of the four headteachers' use of first person pronouns.

It is significant, and pertinent to the present discussion, that sometimes all four headteachers used the second person singular pronoun 'you', as Table 8/1 shows, and the following examples of the headteachers' spoken discourse illustrate this:

**Headteacher 1, Extract A:**

'That's a difficulty of the job because you can't now rely on the staffing officer to give you any sort of clear information and so, you know, you've got governors who are unhappy about this ... ..'

**Headteacher 2, Extract D:**

'I mean if you're feeling a bit glum sometimes you take people round ... And it makes you feel good, yeh, and it probably does you good.'

**Headteacher 3, Extract A:**

'... the growing pressures that parents are facing, you are very limited in what you can do. There's very little that one can do to alleviate that ... ..'

**Headteacher 4, Extract B:**

'... I find I enjoy going off to the odd meeting, some of course are a waste of time and you feel very resentful because there are lots of things that you can be doing back at the ranch and feel they really need you.'

This use of the second person pronoun 'you' could be seen as an indicator of detachment in the headteachers' spoken discourse, as is sometimes the use of the word 'one' to signify the person is speaking generally or in an abstract manner, not specifically. In all of the 43 instances of the headteachers' use of the second person pronoun 'you' (see Table 8/1), and **Headteacher 3's** single use of 'one', the individual headteacher's talk shows involvement with concrete reality and demonstrates some degree of personal disclosure. This is well illustrated by the above examples

and in a quotation from Headteacher 4 (Extract D):

'It's tremendously therapeutic to be able to talk about the job, it's made me think about it quite hard, what I actually do with my time. But it's so nice to be to be able to talk about it, because nobody ever asks you how you feel.'

In all the instances of the headteachers' use of the second person pronoun 'you', the pronoun could be replaced by the first person pronouns 'I' or 'me' and the sense of the sentence could be taken to remain basically the same. For example, in the last quotation **Headteacher 4** is, essentially, saying that 'nobody ever asks me how I feel'. This use of the pronoun 'you' is taken as a style of speaking which indicates involvement.

Chafe and Danielwicz do not cite the use of the second person pronoun 'you' as an indicator of involvement.

There is a significant difference between **Headteacher 1's** use of plural first person pronouns and the relatively smaller number used by the other three headteachers (see Table 8/2). Had **Headteacher 1** not used the first person plural 'we' a total of 17 times in Extract C his usage of the word would have been similar to that of the other headteachers. Also, **Headteacher 1** uses the plural pronouns 'us', 'our' and 'ourselves' whereas there is only one instance (the use of 'our' by **Headteacher 3**) of the other headteachers using plural pronouns other than 'we'. In all the instances **Headteacher 1's** talk shows involvement with self and concrete reality simultaneously since he generally perceives 'us' headteachers, 'we' the school have policies, 'our' inspectors, reminding 'ourselves', etc. - all of which suggests a style of speaking in the plural rather than in the singular.

Chafe and Danielwicz (page 21) define features of detachment as showing 'an interest in ideas that are not tied to specific people, events, times or places, but which

are abstract and timeless'. Specific examples of features of detachment given by Chafe and Danielwicz are:

1. The use of abstract subjects: Clauses whose subjects refer to abstracts.
2. The use of passive constructions which allows the writer to avoid mentioning any concrete doer and thus to treat the event in an abstract way.
3. Indications of probability: words which express the probability of some statement being true. For example words such as normally, usually, primarily, principally and virtually.

An examination of the four Headteachers' spoken discourse reveals no significant use of any of the above features of detachment.

## Summary and conclusions

The analysis of the headteachers' spoken discourse explored the use of Chafe and Danielwicz's notion of involvement and detachment - as indicated by the use of first person pronouns - as a possible measure of whether the four headteachers talked about their job in an objective, detached, way or in a subjective, personal, way.

Comparable extracts from the long interview with each of the headteachers (which are analysed in detail in Chapter Four) provided examples of the headteacher's spoken discourse. The extracts were transcribed for the purpose of analysis.

Analysis looked at the three kinds of involvement cited by Chafe and Danielwicz as being present in spoken language, and to a less extent in some written language. These were involvement with audience, with oneself and with the concrete reality of what is being talked about. The headteacher's spoken discourse contained examples of all three (as did the diary and job description data discussed in Chapter Seven).

Analysis of the headteacher's use of first person pronouns brought to light different categories of usage and different categories of involvement, which are summarised as follows.

Involvement with the interviewer: This kind of involvement permeates the headteachers' spoken discourse by the very nature of their negotiating the interview with the interviewer, who was the headteacher/researcher. Two headteachers used a total of five first person pronouns in the mechanics of negotiating the interview, and these pronouns are not included in the overall count of first person pronouns used specifically in talk about the subject matter of the interview extracts.

An indicator of involvement with audience cited by Chafe and Danielwicz is the use of the phrase 'you know' used when the speaker is seeking to reassure himself or herself that he or she is being understood without actually obtaining any such confirmation. All four of the headteachers used the phrase to varying degrees.

Involvement with the interviewer as fellow headteacher and researcher:

Using the pronouns 'you', 'your' and 'we' the spoken discourse of all four headteachers demonstrated involvement with the interviewer personally in his dual role of fellow headteacher and researcher. All of the instances of this category of involvement occurred in Extract D of the reflective interview data. This is not surprising since the subject matter of that area of questioning was the phenomenon of the interview itself and the implications of the fellow headteacher/researcher carrying out the interview and the research.

Involvement and detachment with self and with concrete reality.

Chafe and Danielwicz discuss involvement and detachment with oneself and with concrete reality as two separate entities. However, examination of the four headteachers' use of first person pronouns in their context suggests that involvement with self is generally a prerequisite of involvement with concrete reality, and that in fact the two types of involvement tend to occur simultaneously.

The headteachers' spoken discourse and its indications of simultaneous involvement with self and with the concrete reality of the job demonstrates that the four headteachers generally talked about their job in subjective, personal ways rather than in objective, detached terms.

Any comparison with the present Chapter's finding and what the diary and job description data (Chapter Seven) might yield about the headteachers' use of first person pronouns and their indication of involvement and subjectivity is limited to the data of **Headteacher 3**, set out in Table 7/3. **Headteacher 3**'s combined actual and implied use of first person pronouns as a percentage of total words used in the diary and job description data is 5.32%, whereas her use of first person pronouns in the extracts from her spoken discourse is 8.03%. This comparison suggests a relatively lesser degree of involvement in **Headteacher 3**'s written discourse than in her spoken discourse. It is difficult to make a comparison with Chafe and Danielwicz's finding since the written and spoken discourse examined in the present investigation are fundamentally different from the informal letters, academic papers, lectures and informal conversations which were used by the authors. Also a different measure of usage had to be adopted in the present investigation - see Chapter Seven.

In the present investigation's use of first person pronouns as an indicator of involvement several problematics and discoveries came to light: the question of implied use of first person pronouns; the individual differences demonstrated in the headteachers' styles of writing and methods of completing the diaries and job descriptions; and the headteachers' use of the second person singular pronoun 'you' which indicated involvement.

The subjectivity of the ways in which the headteachers talked about their job is clearly demonstrated by their personal disclosure in the spoken discourse examined. Though the degree of personal disclosure varies between headteachers, it is closely linked to the use of first person pronouns and is a frequent, and essential, feature of all four headteachers' spoken discourse about their primary school headship experience. There are many examples of personal disclosure in the four headteachers'

spoken discourse in the quotations set out in the present chapter and in Chapter Four.

Analysis in the present chapter leads to the belief that the subjectivity of the reflective interview data is not questionable in the ways in which the diary data 'could' have been because of the individual differences which the written data contained.

The proposal that analysis of the headteachers' talk depicts their involvement in a complex social process - which is supported by the finding of their simultaneous involvement with self and with the concrete reality of the job - is pertinent to the investigation's four-fold theoretical framework (set out in Chapter Three), and is supported by the findings of the diary data analysed in Chapter Six.

The findings of Chapter Six (diary data analysis) demonstrate the headteacher to be at the centre of a complex network of responsibilities, expectations, needs, unanticipated issues, opportunities, constraints, etc., involving a wide range of people within and beyond the school (see Displays in Appendix 2). It was proposed that this centrality of the headteacher's position results in headteacher behaviour which occurs on two levels; at a practical level of reacting, initiating, coping, etc., and at a theoretical level largely to do with creating an overview of the school's aims, needs and functioning and the ways in which this is implicitly communicated and translated into everyday headship behaviour by constantly generating, maintaining and moving forward - via a wide range of activities - the values and objectives which underpin that overview. All of which, it was proposed, gives the job a 'particularly personal nature'.

In the light of the investigation's findings beyond Chapter Six, it is proposed that the 'particular personal nature' of the job is bound up with the individual



headteacher's centrality and his or her having to interpret a broad, complex and at times ambiguous job. Therefore, the aim of Chapter Nine is to develop a more specific and more useful concept than the 'particularly personal nature' of the job to describe the essential subjective character of primary school headship as demonstrated by the investigation's findings.

## CHAPTER NINE

### Discussion and implications of findings.

The conclusions and propositions put forward in the following discussion derive from an interpretation of the four headteachers' perceptions of their job as demonstrated in the diary data; in the findings from the reflective interviews; and in the job descriptions which each of the headteachers wrote. The discussion is given additional substance by reference to the literature, by the findings of the pilot study and by the headteacher/researcher's twelve years of primary school headship experience (in two schools) within the I.L.E.A.

The investigation's findings demonstrate the headteacher's everyday workload as having the following features:

1. The job (as depicted by the activities the four headteachers recorded and what they said and wrote) is multi-dimensional and has a relatively heavy workload, which results in it being demanding, complex and at times ambiguous. The average working day for the four headteachers was 8 hours and 58 minutes, with very few breaks.
2. The job can be seen to have a particularly personal nature which stems from the headteacher having to interpret a complex job which does not have easily quantifiable outcomes or clearly definable boundaries. See (6) below.
3. The job consists of a wide range of tasks and responsibilities, and the four headteachers recorded their activities as ranging from 2 to 540 minutes in duration.

4. Data analysis shows that the job is predominately people-orientated.
5. Data analysis suggests that the job has little planned structure. The four headteachers did not articulate a particular style or approach to their work beyond a personal and interpretive response to their unique and contextually generated workload.
6. Many of the activities that the four headteachers recorded appear to have been emergent rather than planned, and many activities occurred simultaneously. Both of these inter-related features, and the relatively heavy workload, implicitly suggest that much of the job is fragmented and that the individual headteacher was often in the position of having to react and also of having to select and prioritise between activities.
7. The four headteachers rarely described a day as typical, and it is possible that the headteachers view each day as a day unto itself and this constitutes the typicality of the headteacher's everyday workload.
8. A relatively small number of activities recorded by the headteachers - 34 out of a total of 524 - were activities with teachers and children that could be said to have had a direct bearing on the teaching and learning processes (including curriculum development work) in the school.
9. Data analysis (Table 6/5B and Appendix 3) shows that the majority of the headteachers' time was spend on headteacher's routine activities (e.g. assembly, lunch supervision, visiting classes, etc.); organisation and routine school matters (including children's bad behaviour); telephoning; and

administration work: all of which overwhelmingly involved teachers, children, support staff and others, except in the case of administration and office work which were carried out alone.

A review of the official documents, legislation and the recent literature shows the ways in which primary school headship has become more complex and more demanding as a result of the continuing changes in legislation and changes in society's needs and expectations. An example of the primary school headteacher's job as being complex and encompassing a wide range of tasks and expectations is the official definition of headship (i.e. headship generally) set out in the 1987 Order (Statutory Instrument No. 650, 1987), which resulted from the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987, and the current Articles of Government for schools within the local education authority.

The relatively small number of activities recorded by the headteachers which could be said to have been directly related to teaching and learning, and curriculum development work, stand out as significant when considering the pedagogical and curricular aims and priorities stated by the four headteachers. (Allowance has been made for the presence of industrial action which affected the schools by way of there being no after school staff meetings.) Coulson (1986), page 7 suggests that teaching and curriculum aspects of the primary school headteacher's work have a high priority, and as a consequence he adapted and extended Mintzberg's (1973) three-fold framework for describing managerial work (discussed in Chapter Two) in the following way.

Coulson added a fourth category to Mintzberg's three-fold framework, and it was suggested in Chapter Two that this fourth category of Coulson's helps to make primary school headship fundamentally different from conventional (scientific) management, and to some degree different from

secondary school headship. Coulson termed his new category Leading Professional Roles and it embraces four sub-categories: Goal setter and evaluator; Curriculum co-ordinator and developer; Teacher; and Exemplar of professional values.

It is proposed that, in the light of the investigation's findings, activities directly related to the teaching and learning processes (including curriculum development work) are aspects of the headteacher's job which are difficult to achieve, even though the four headteachers saw such aspects as central to their job.

The investigation's findings suggest that the four sub-categories of Coulson's Leading professional roles, which he constructed to describe the fundamental nature of the primary school headteacher's job, are not generally achieved in any direct or straightforward way: rather they are seen as often coming into operation in subtle and complex ways through a particular concept of primary school headship in everyday practice. This concept, in a tentative form, figured in the investigation's theoretical framework and it has been developed and substantiated by the findings. It is discussed below.

The emergent concept of primary school headship in everyday practice; its essential subjective character.

The investigation's finding show the job to be multi-dimensional, complex and in a constant state of change, as the recent literature and legislation show. Often the job is without easily quantifiable content and outcomes, or clearly definable boundaries<sup>a</sup>, and it is at times ambiguous.

The dominant characteristic of the job is that the everyday workload is contextually generated; it appears to have little planned structure, beyond a number of routine

activities, and accountability did not appear to be a concern of the four headteachers.

The headteacher is seen as being located at the centre of a complex network of demands, responsibilities, expectation, needs, unanticipated issues, choices, etc., involving interaction with teachers, children, parents, support staff, governors, local education authority personnel, social services staff and others. This view of the headteacher is substantiated by the Displays which constitute Appendix 2 and by Appendix 3 which illustrates the complexity and unique features of the four instances of primary school headship as perceived and recorded by the four headteachers.

It is proposed that the centrality of the headteacher's position within the overall functioning of the school is generated by the headteacher:

1. being the person with ultimate responsibility;
2. having an overall view and generally being the co-ordinator of many of the school's activities; and
3. often being the only person with discretionary time.

The three factors, combined with the relatively heavy workload, generally result in many of the headteacher's everyday activities 'presenting themselves' for response. All of which result in the fragmentation and prioritising which data analysis suggests are an inherent part of the everyday workload.

Though there was a similarity across the four headteachers in their use of categories to describe their activities, the above features of the job combine to make each instance of headship unique.

The job can be said to have a particularly personal nature in that the individual headteacher is seen as having to interpret and respond to a relatively heavy, complex and

sometimes stressful workload which is made up of a multifarious range of demands and activities which are specific to his or her particular school. The workload consists of a significant number of unplanned activities which often require an immediate response on the part of the headteacher and, as already mentioned, this results in much of the job being of a fragmented nature. Examples of two contrasting unplanned activities recorded by the headteachers were **Headteacher 1's** 540-minute involvement in a case of sexual abuse reported by two girls and **Headteacher 3's** reaction to the number of parents who needed to speak to her while she was teaching a class on Thursday - 'I do understand their frustration but it sure as hell makes life difficult for me'. The particularly personal nature of the job is also brought about by the individual headteacher often having to select and to prioritise between activities, whether these activities are emergent or of a more routine nature and part of the relatively large workload.

Hoyle (1986, page 101) supports the above account of the features of the job as depicted by the emergent picture of primary school headship, though he is writing about headship generally:

'The role of the head has certainly changed in recent years. It has become overloaded with expectations to the point at which, were heads seek to meet them all, they would risk the burn-out which is affecting so many. One of the dilemmas of the head is to select from the range and diversity of expectations those to which they should give most time and attention.'

From the discussion so far it could be believed that the broad and sometimes ambiguous nature of the headteacher's job results in the individual headteacher sometimes being at a loss as to objectives and their achievement. The investigation's findings indicate that this is far from true.

In the reflective interviews the four headteachers were quite clear about their aims and priorities and about the essentials of the job. These were seen firstly - by all four headteachers - as the facilitation of the teaching and learning in the school (including curriculum development work) and the promotion of the ethos of the school and the quality of relationships within the school. Secondly, the headteachers cited the needs of their particular school: for example, the quality of the environment as a learning resource; reading standards; creating 'a place of learning which is challenging' for adults and children; and improving the standard of the children's education.

Each of the four headteachers appeared to make sense of the job and relate to it in everyday practice by reference to an implicit overarching set of beliefs and goals which seems to be carried in the head and to influence and permeate the headteacher's everyday activities. Evidence of the presence of such an overarching set of beliefs and goals and its influence on the headteacher's activities are the twenty noteworthy events, and the headteachers' comments about them, which were discussed in Chapter Six. It was observed, for example, that **Headteacher 2's** comments about the noteworthy events which he named give the impression that each event named, and the activities that resulted from it, were part of some coherent whole - part of what the headteacher implicitly saw as the school's fundamental purpose - being achieved. The concept of the headteacher's implicit overarching set of beliefs and goals emerges as part of the essential subjective character of the headteacher's job, as discussed below.

Analysis of data has revealed that the job has a 'particularly personal nature' (which is contextually generated), and this finding has featured at various points in this and the preceding chapters. However, the notion of the job as having a particularly personal nature is an inadequate description as it stands - yet it has served as an analytical step in the move towards achieving an



understanding of the subjective character of the headteacher's job as it occurs in everyday practice.

Reference has been made to Coulson's (1986) view that primary school headship is essentially a process, or a series of processes, of personal influence on the part of the individual headteacher. This view of the job is held by the present writer to be only a partial explanation of the essential subjective character of primary school headship. It emphasizes the leadership and influential nature of the job and under rates the need for an interpretation on the part of the individual headteacher. The following model illustrates the point.

The model of primary school headship (i.e. in everyday practice) to emerge from the investigation's accumulative findings depicts the essential subjective character of the job as

a continuous process of personal interpretation and influence.

The model can be crudely expressed in terms of the diagram overleaf, and it is explained more fully in the following pages.

The essential subjective character of primary school headship:  
a continuous process of personal interpretation and influence.

#### THE NEED FOR INTERPRETATION

The everyday workload is contextually generated by the individual headteacher's location at the centre of a complex social network of expectations, responsibilities, choices, etc.

The resultant workload consists of a wide range of activities and situations, making it multi-dimensional, demanding, complex and at times ambiguous.

Activities are predominately people-orientated (teachers, children, support staff, parents, L.E.A. personnel, governors, social services, medical and psychological services & others). Many activities are emergent rather than planned, resulting in much of the job being of a fragmented and unstructured nature. Relatively few activities have a direct bearing on the teaching and learning processes.



#### THE PROCESS OF INTERPRETATION

Headteacher has ultimate responsibility to governors and L.E.A.

Headteacher interprets the multifarious activities and situations by a process of reflective interpretation (reacting, initiating, selecting, prioritising, etc.).

Headteacher has the overall view and is the school's unifying agent.

Often the only person with discretionary time.

Interpretation involves the interaction of the social/structural and personal dimensions of the job.

The interpretation is made by reference to an implicit and personal overarching set of beliefs and goals; it is mediated by language; and it is fundamentally linked to the need-disposition of the individual.



#### THE EXPRESSION OF THE INTERPRETATION

A continuous process of personal influence, which brings clarity, coherence and commitment to the school's multifarious purposes.

The process of personal influence is largely shaped by the individual's use of language and it consists of a range of headteacher behaviour which (explicitly and implicitly) promotes his or her beliefs and goals for the school by the way in which each activity is interpreted and handled. For example, leading, doing, consulting, negotiating, listening, delegating, encouraging, intervening, etc. But principally by being an exemplar of professional values and practice, and by creating with colleagues a corporate approach where everyone (children, teachers, support staff, parents and others) feels valued and committed to the purposes of the school.

First and foremost the model views the individual headteacher as having to interpret the multifarious activities and situations which constitute his or her unique school situation. This process of personal interpretation is mediated by language in that language facilitates the interpretation.

The present investigation is based on a symbolic interactionist perspective, using the term as described in the reference to Blumer (1969) in Chapter Seven. The perspective views human beings as making sense of their world via a reflective and socially derived interpretation of everyday phenomena. The investigation's findings support the view that the individual headteacher interprets what can be conceived of as a broad, complex, demanding and sometimes ambiguous job in his or her own way, as did the fifteen secondary school headteachers in the study by Hall, Mackay and Morgan (1986). Findings show that the process of reflective interpretation is particularly pertinent to the primary school headteacher's job and is in fact part of its essential subjective character. All human beings make sense of their everyday world in the way that the symbolic interactionist perspective proposes, but the multi-dimensional nature of the primary school headteacher's job and the complexities and ambiguities that surround it require the headteacher to be constantly reflecting and interpreting (and creating) as a feature of the job. This is in contrast to other types of jobs which have more structure and clearer boundaries, goals and outcomes.

The reflective process of interpretation is dependent on personal and social factors for its outcome, but ultimately it is the personal interpretation of the individual headteacher. As findings demonstrate, faced with a broad, complex, demanding and sometimes ambiguous everyday workload, the headteacher has to react, initiate, select, prioritise, etc. in order to make the job meaningful and manageable.

One of the four inter-related theoretical propositions of the investigation (set out on page one of Chapter Three) views the individual headteacher as constructing his or her own sense of the job via a reflective and socially derived interpretation of the interaction of the two main dimensions of primary school order. These dimensions are the social/structural dimension (with the central concept role) and the personal dimension which has at its centre the need-disposition of the individual headteacher (after Getzels, Lipham and Campbell 1968). In the light of the investigation's findings this theoretical proposition is seen as central to any understanding of the headteacher's response to the job.

The above theoretical proposition of the headteacher being involved in an interpretation of the social and personal dimensions of the job implicitly carries an explanation of some of the complexities, contradictions and controversial issues which the four headteachers talked and wrote about or are implicit in the data. The following are some examples.

As a consequence of the wide range of demands and expectations placed on primary schools by Government, the local education authority, parents and others, the headteacher has to interpret his or her particular situation in order to give it coherence, to rationalise it, and make it manageable for himself or herself and the staff. The investigation shows that one of the contradictions which the headteachers found difficult to cope with is the fact that too much of the workload consisted of tasks which diverted their time and energy away from what they saw as their real job, namely being directly involved in supporting teaching and learning. **Headteacher 3** feels that though she has ultimate responsibility (i.e. to governors, local education authority and parents) she has little authority and power to eliminate bad classroom practice. This is similar to **Headteacher 2's** feeling that forces beyond the school over which he has no influence now determine his job and make it

difficult; he interprets the job as best he can. Aspects of the Government Order (Statutory Instrument No. 650, 1987) governing teachers' pay and conditions of employment are open to interpretation.

At the level of school organisation and classroom practice there can be disagreement amongst teachers, parents, the local education authority, governors, central government and others as to such matters as children's discipline; the teaching of controversial and sensitive issues; the best method of teaching literacy (i.e. a developmental approach or dependence on a graded reading scheme); policy for parents' access to teachers; policy on racist behaviour and how it should be dealt with; the degree of involvement in supporting families with their domestic and social problems; and interpretation of the law (in actual practice) as regards assemblies. **Headteacher 2** reported having had death threats from parents whose views clashed with the school's anti-racist and anti-sexist teaching policies. The list of examples could be extensive, but in all cases in the final analysis - after consulting others where this is felt to be appropriate - the headteacher has to interpret the given complex or controversial situation. How the headteacher generates and uses his or her final interpretation to further his or her goals and beliefs for the running of the school and support of classroom practice is the substance of the second part of the concept of the essential subjective character of the job being a continuous process of personal interpretation and influence on the part of the headteacher.

The model set out above depicts the headteacher as not achieving his or her goals in a straight-forward way, but rather via a complex process which is (a) predominately people-orientated and (b) dependant on the headteacher's capacity to create, communicate and share a vision of the school's overall functioning and future development. (The latter is seen as part of the headteacher's overarching set of beliefs and goals - discussed at various points in the

present chapter.

Analysis of the four headteachers' talk and writing shows that they described their job to the researcher in subjective, personal terms, rather than in an objective, detached way. This, and the ways in which the headteachers' talk demonstrates indications of simultaneous involvement with self and with the concrete reality of the job, implicitly depicts their involvement<sup>in</sup> complex headteacher behaviour which is at the same time both personal and social.

The four headteachers' responses to their multifarious daily activities, and their dependence on an implicit overarching set of beliefs and goals, is similar to the concept of 'purposing' which Vaill (in Sergiovanni and Corbally 1984, page 91) constructed to explain the behaviour of leadership in high-performing systems:

'I propose the word "purposing" to refer to that continuous stream of actions by an organisation's formal leadership which have the effect of inducing clarity, consensus, and commitment regarding the organisation's basic purposes.'

Vaill's term 'continuous stream of actions' is seen as relevant to the ways in which the primary school headteacher carries out the job and at the same time promotes his or her beliefs and goals.

The four headteachers' responses to the activities which they recorded themselves as having carried out in the course of the day's work are seen to generally in some way contain opportunities for influencing other people and for achieving short-term and long-term objectives. The individual headteacher's responses and actions are given this coherence by implicit or explicit reference to his or her overarching set of beliefs and goals, as was discussed above.

The ways in which the overarching set of beliefs and goals generally permeates the individual headteacher's everyday activities - and results in him or her being the school's unifying agent - is seen as constituting a process of personal influence. This concept belongs to Coulson page 76, who describes the process of personal influence as a process of leading - of the head's exerting influence in the school setting, especially leading by example. However, the model of the essential subjective character of primary school headship set out above depicts the process of personal influence in more specific terms.

The philosophy and expectations underpinning the headteacher's set of beliefs and goals could perhaps be seen as to be too closely identified with the individual headteacher's own personality and need-disposition, and therefore not necessarily reflecting a true whole-school, collaborative, approach. However, the existence of such a set of beliefs and goals appears to have been an essential tool by which the four headteachers made sense of their job.

The investigation's finding in relation to preparation for primary school headship and headteachers' in-service training and professional needs.

The local education authority's provision for in-service training for primary school headteachers, and the content of such in-service training, were discussed in Chapter Two. The document reproduced in Chapter Two - 'Recommendations for Support and Training for New Heads' - gives an insight into the needs of new headteachers as perceived by a group of new primary school headteachers themselves. The range of help sought by the new headteachers, as depicted in the document, is very broad and covers numerous types of knowledge, skills, experiences, personal development and personal support, including an 'action plan for own survival'.

Preparation for headship at the level of in-service training was something of a hit-and-miss affair for the four headteachers. Three of the headteachers saw having worked for a 'good' headteacher (in whatever capacity) as the most significant and most valuable preparation that they had received. Support from fellow headteachers during the early days of being in the job was cited by three of the headteachers as having been very valuable.

Headteacher in-service at the time of writing is dominated by preparation for the implementation of the National Curriculum and Local Management of Schools which are the result of the Education Reform Act 1988. The implications of the Act are discussed below.

None of the four headteachers articulated a specific style or approach to their job. They operated in quite unstructured and complex ways, as illustrated by the model of primary school headship which was constructed from an interpretation of the findings of the investigation and discussed above.

By (a) exploration of the emergent concept of the particularly personal nature of the job and (b) by constructing the model of primary school headship set out above, the present writer has shown that the job in everyday practice is fundamentally concerned with the need-disposition of the individual headteacher. This has clear implications for headship training in that such training needs to focus on the personal qualities and self-knowledge of the individual headteacher and his or her capacity for inter-personal relationships. This is not to say that the acquisition of knowledge, skills and techniques does not have a place in headship training; the list produced by the new headteachers mentioned above clearly shows that they have. However, operation of any of these more conventional components of managerial and leadership work is shaped by the individual's functioning at a subjective level, and this is largely to do with his or her self-knowledge and the



function<sup>c</sup> which language has in facilitating the reflective interpretation by which headteachers make sense of, and carry out, a broad, complex, demanding and sometimes ambiguous job.

A detailed discussion of the role of language in the primary school headteacher's everyday functioning is beyond the scope of the present investigation. However, any exploration of the job from a subjective perspective must acknowledge the fundamental role that language plays at two levels:

- a. it facilitates and mediates the headteacher's reflective interpretation of the personal and social dimensions of the job (discussed above); and
- b. the headteacher's use of language shapes the effectiveness of his or her influence on the school and its everyday functioning.

The present writer believes that it is the context in which the headteacher talks which determines the kind of language he or she chooses to use and, consequently, the degree of personal disclosure which is embedded in his or her talk. For example, talking to a colleague, a parent and a local education authority inspector about a problematic curricular issue would probably involve the headteacher in different choices of language, depending of the kind of influence (message) he or she wished to generate. Different styles or approaches to the job of primary school headship are seen as coming into being through the individual headteacher's use of language and the ways in which language facilitates and mediates the headteacher's involvement in what is essentially a continuous process of personal interpretation and influence. All of which makes the role of language in the job of primary school headship an important issue for headteacher training and for further empirical research.

The importance of self-knowledge featured in each of the four headteachers' reflective accounts of their headship experience. **Headteacher 1** said that you have got to accept the flaws and weaknesses within yourself and within other people. **Headteacher 2** felt that management and leadership are appropriate to the job but ultimately success in these is to do with 'personal strengths'. In explaining that she did not have a particular style or approach to the job, **Headteacher 3** felt that 'she went by her own personality'. **Headteacher 4** saw the job as being done in different ways by different people; she emphasised the importance of language when she said that it helps to be able to articulate and be able to present your case.

It can be argued that there needs to be a more systematic programme for induction than is at present available, and that experienced headteachers need opportunities for further professional development and support. Cooper and Shut (1988) put forward a good case for mandatory certification of headteachers at a national level via an integrated approach which avoids the rigidity and other criticisms of certification training programmes in the United States.

However, the important question is, what would be the specific content and method of delivery of certification training programmes in Britain? And, crucially, what view of primary school headship, as it occurs in everyday practice, would such programmes carry? There appears to be at present little agreement as to what headteachers should learn on their induction and professional development courses. Cooper and Shut offer a brief but broad typology which they set out under three headings: Knowledge of the job and resources; Skills and processes; and Concepts and theory. Unfortunately, the 'typology' does not go into any detail such as would be useful to the present investigation and it does not give a clear and coherent picture of what the content of a specific certification training programme might look like.

The present writer feels that in the light of personal headship experience and the fact that preparation for headship was something of a hit-and-miss affair for the four headteachers who took part in the investigation, headteachers need a single independent professional organisation which will give them professional support in the way that the General Medical Council serves the interests of doctors and the medical profession generally. The role of such an organisation would be to set standards for the profession; co-ordinate induction and in-service needs for experienced headteachers; to establish criteria for service; and promote an improvement in the level of resources and training presently available. The organisation would also need to offer support at a personal level, with procedures for dealing with headteachers' grievances and other matters which prevent them from carrying out their work to a high standard. It could be said that the various trade unions to which primary school headteachers presently belong fulfil some of these needs; never-the-less a single unifying body is needed.

An example of the need for a unified professional body to give support and clarity to primary school headteachers is the issue of a Performance Related Pay Scheme for headteachers which is currently being considered by some local education authorities.

The I.L.E.A. members of the headteachers' (and deputy heads') union/professional association the National Association of Head Teachers received notice (August 1989) that at least one (un-named) Borough was proposing to introduce a Performance Related Pay Scheme for headteachers. The letter advises any members of the Association who become involved in such a scheme to write to the Chief Education Officer of the Borough concerned stating that they are 'not willing to have their existing contracts amended until the union or professional association to which they belong has been given an opportunity of concluding negotiation and

thereafter of giving advice to their members on the benefits or otherwise of such a scheme'. The issue of performance related pay for headteachers featured in an article in the Times Educational Supplement (Hackett, 20.10.1989) where it was revealed that Westminster Council had got as far as discussing with heads the kind of performance indicators that might be used for reward bonuses. The article states that headteachers might qualify for a bonus payment for improving pupil attendance, increasing the involvement of parents or reducing the turnover of teachers. The National Association of Head Teachers is said to be determined that the scheme will not use examination results or the planned national assessments as a performance indicator. At the time of writing the debate about performance related pay for headteachers is in its early stages.

Central to the setting up and operation of a Performance Related Pay Scheme for headteachers is the complex question of quantifying the job and establishing criteria by which the performance of headteachers will be judged. It is proposed that the different parties involved in drawing up such criteria could have differing views from those of the practising headteachers as to what primary school headteachers actually do, what they should do, and how their performance should be judged.

Whatever criteria are drawn up for judging headteachers' performance, the construction of the present investigation's model of primary school headship has demonstrated that the job is much more than any list of tasks, skills and achievements might suggest. Findings show the inherent difficulties in attempting to quantify and evaluate the wide range of activities and situations which the four headteachers recorded as having made up their daily workload. The four headteachers identified in depth the unique features of the job, and it is argued that such an understanding of the headteachers' subjective experiences is the only way to achieve a coherent and analytical understanding of their everyday work. It was argued in

Chapter One that conventional management models applied to the primary school are prescriptive rather than descriptive and are therefore of limited value in that they deal with known generalities and promote an over-simplified and restricted view of primary school headship as it exists in everyday practice.

### The implications of the Education Reform Act 1988

Discussion of the implications of the implementation of the Education Reform Act 1988 featured in Chapter Two. The 1988 Act did not come into force until after all data had been collected, and it does not feature in the headteachers' discourse.

It is the experience of the present writer that - at the present time - two particular issues generated by the 1988 Act preoccupy headteachers in the Borough of Chesley and feature heavily in current educational journals:

1. The practicalities of implementing the National Curriculum (English, mathematics and science) by aligning requirements of the Act with current good practice and identifying short-comings.
2. Worries that the requirements of the Act (i.e Local Management of Schools) will make the job of headteacher much more like that of an administrator or accountant and divert headteachers' time away from what they see as their job - i.e. involvement in supporting teaching and learning and curriculum development.

The requirements of the National Curriculum as set out in the statutory documents need interpretation at several levels. For example, the Act says **what** must be taught, but not **how** it should be taught in everyday

classroom practice, and the D.E.S. guidelines (1989) state that the Act deliberately allows flexibility for schools to provide their teaching in a variety of ways. The issues surrounding cross-curricular teaching within the school's overall curriculum and methods of recording children's progress and needs are further examples of the need for interpretation and detailed planning on the part of headteachers and teachers.

Local Management of Schools will broaden the job of the primary school headteacher yet further and involve him or her in a range of interpretative activities. Tasks and responsibilities previously carried out by the local education authority will, with the implementation of Local Management of Schools, have to be part of the headteacher's job. The headteacher, in consultation with the governors, will have responsibility for the school's finances and personnel/industrial relations procedures. This will involve budgeting and accountancy work and many new tasks to do with monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the educational and cost effectiveness of the school's use of financial resources.

Under the 1988 Act the local education authority will have some mandatory financial responsibilities and it may choose whether or not to delegate a small number of its present functions. However, the majority of the education budget will be given over to the individual school, and examples of some of the new areas of responsibility are:

Teachers and support staff:

their salaries, recruitment, training, appraisal, promotion, grievance procedures, etc.

Building and site:

administration costs, structural and maintenance costs, running costs (water, energy, etc.).

Equipment: furniture and durables.

Books and consumables:

presently the responsibility of individual schools under the I.L.E.A.'s Alternative Use of Resources scheme.

The Local Management of Schools will involve the headteacher (in consultation with others) in much more than allocating money to various areas of the school's functioning and maintenance, and evaluating whether or not the money is well spent. Local Management of Schools is seen by the present writer as resourcing a well constructed development plan which is centred on:

- a. the creation of a caring, stimulating, well organized and safe school environment for children and adults;
- b. promoting and resourcing the teaching and learning processes within the school;
- c. providing for the staff development and curriculum development which will bring depth and quality to children's learning; and
- d. valuing and supporting the work of all support and administrative staff.

The construction of any such development plan is seen as a broad and complex task, and will involve the headteacher in interpreting his or her own unique and contextually generated school situation (e.g. its needs, its achievements, its weaknesses) in order to create a corporate plan together with his or her colleagues and governors.

Even with radical restructure (additional staff and resources, reorganisation of the administrative procedures within the school, etc.) the everyday workload of the primary school headteacher - as it is demonstrated in the present investigation's findings - is not likely to re-form into a more coherent job of largely administration and formal management because of the ramifications of the 1988 Education Reform Act. There will no doubt be some restructuring and reorganization of the job. But any changes will be dependent of financial support and the political climate and this, like the nature of the changes themselves, cannot be speculated at the present time.

The full implications of the 1988 Act's effect on primary school headship will not be known until sometime after the completion of the present investigation. However, it is proposed that the Act (and its resultant Orders and other directives) will bring major changes which will make primary school headteacher's job more complex and probably more demanding than the findings of the investigation demonstrate it to be at present.

From the observations and speculations discussed above, it is proposed that the effects of the 1988 Education Reform Act on the primary school headteacher's job will not detract from the value of the present investigation's findings and conclusions. The essential subjective character of the job will remain as depicted in the present investigation's proposed model of primary school headship in everyday practice: a continuous process of personal interpretation and influence.



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## APPENDIX 1

The diary used in the investigation.

### Notes.

1. The purpose of the diary is to obtain full details as to precisely what headteachers do during the course of their working day. The diary covers five working days, Monday to Friday, which are spread over a period of some months.
2. The information given in this diary is strictly confidential and will not be seen by anyone except William Harrison (the Researcher), his supervisors at Middlesex Polytechnic and Derek May of the Institute of Education, University of London.
3. Please make sure that each page is correctly dated. Start each day on a clean headed page. Should you need more space, please rule up any additional pages and attach them to the diary.
4. Try to make the entries as you go along and do not wait until the end of the day. This will help you avoid the possibility of missing small items. Please give as much detail as possible without letting the completion of the diary interfere with your work too much.
5. Be sure to specify as precisely as possible all activities.
6. Please be as accurate as you can over stating time - the diary asks you to note the time you begin and end an activity. It is always tedious noting time details in this way, but be as accurate as you can.  
  
Should you lose track of the time beyond ten minutes please do not put an approximation. If you really cannot estimate the time please say so.
7. OUTSIDE SCHOOL ACTIVITIES. Specify any activity connected with work (e.g. meetings, courses, work taken home, children's outing).
8. The COMMENTS column is intended for you to record any thoughts, feelings or explanations you may have about a particular activity.
9. Please check that you have completed the MAIN EVENT page for each day.
10. The GENERAL COMMENTS page is for you to add any comments that you wish to make during your involvement with the completion of the diary.

Name of Headteacher :

School :

DAY:

DATE:

TIME ARRIVED AT SCHOOL:

TIME LEFT SCHOOL:

TIME From / to	ACTIVITY	CONTENT	COMMENTS
		(NOT TO SCALE, ORIGINAL DIARY MADE FULL USE OF A4 PAPER)	

Day :

MAIN EVENT OF THE DAY

Date:

Please use this page (and over) to record what you consider to have been the most noteworthy achievement, problem or situation of the day. In describing this event please say whether the outcome, IN YOUR OPINION, was satisfactory or unsatisfactory. If unsatisfactory, can you say why and what might have been needed to secure a more satisfactory outcome?

(NOT TO SCALE, ORIGINAL DIARY MADE FULL USE OF A4 PAPER)

Generally, the day was:

PLEASE  
TICK  
ONE BOX

Very atypical	Atypical	Neither typical nor atypical	Typical	Very Typical

### GENERAL COMMENTS

This page (and over) is for you to add any comments you wish to make during your involvement with the completion of the diary.

(NOT TO SCALE, ORIGINAL DIARY MADE FULL USE OF A4 PAPER)

## APPENDIX 2

DISPLAYS OF THE 20 DAYS FOR WHICH THE FOUR HEADTEACHERS  
COMPLETED THE DIARY

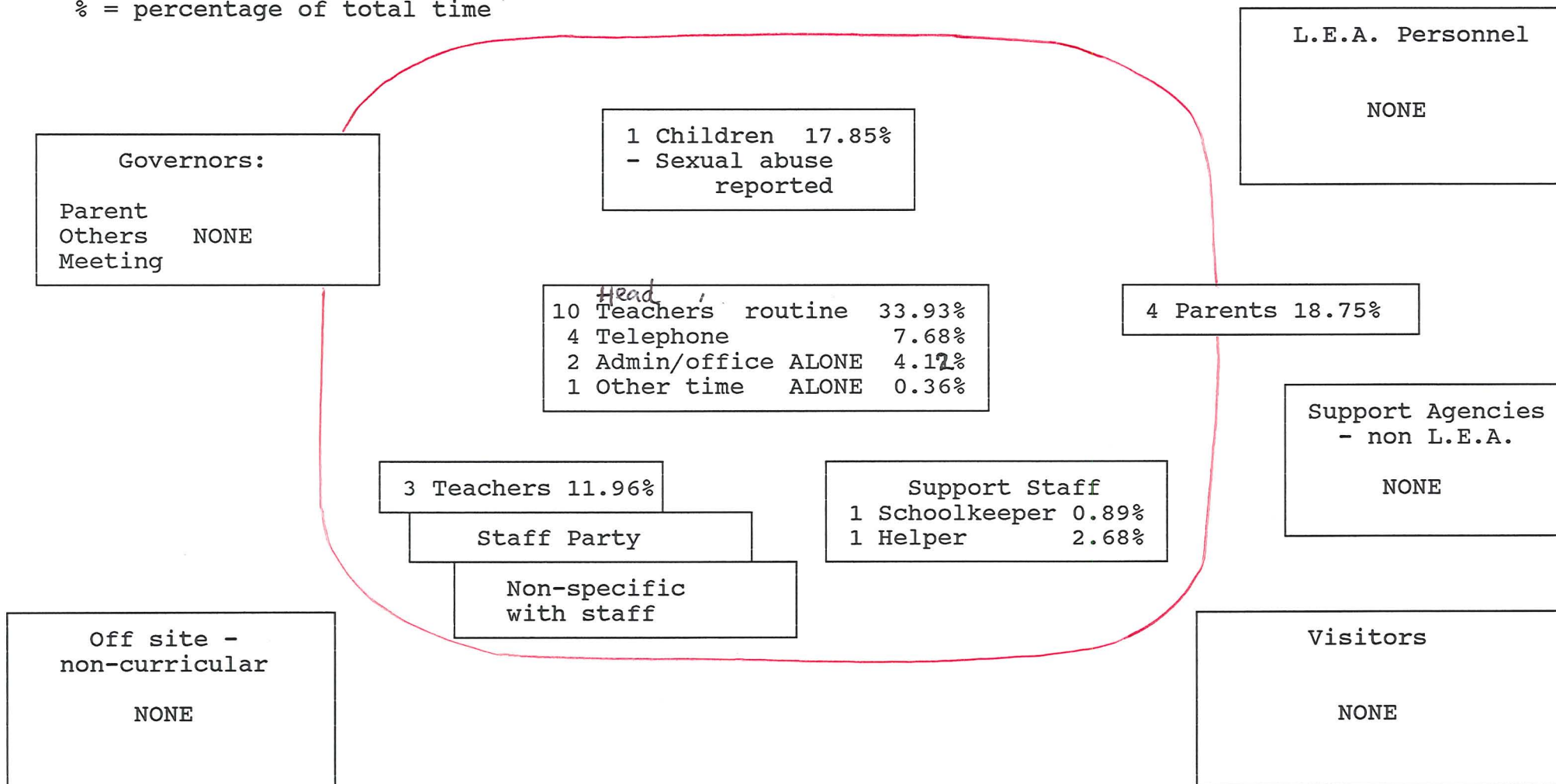
**HEADTEACHER 1 Monday**

Total number of activities : 27  
Total time : 560 mins (9:20)

Before 50    Official Hours. 390    After 120

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 10 mins.: 1.78%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time



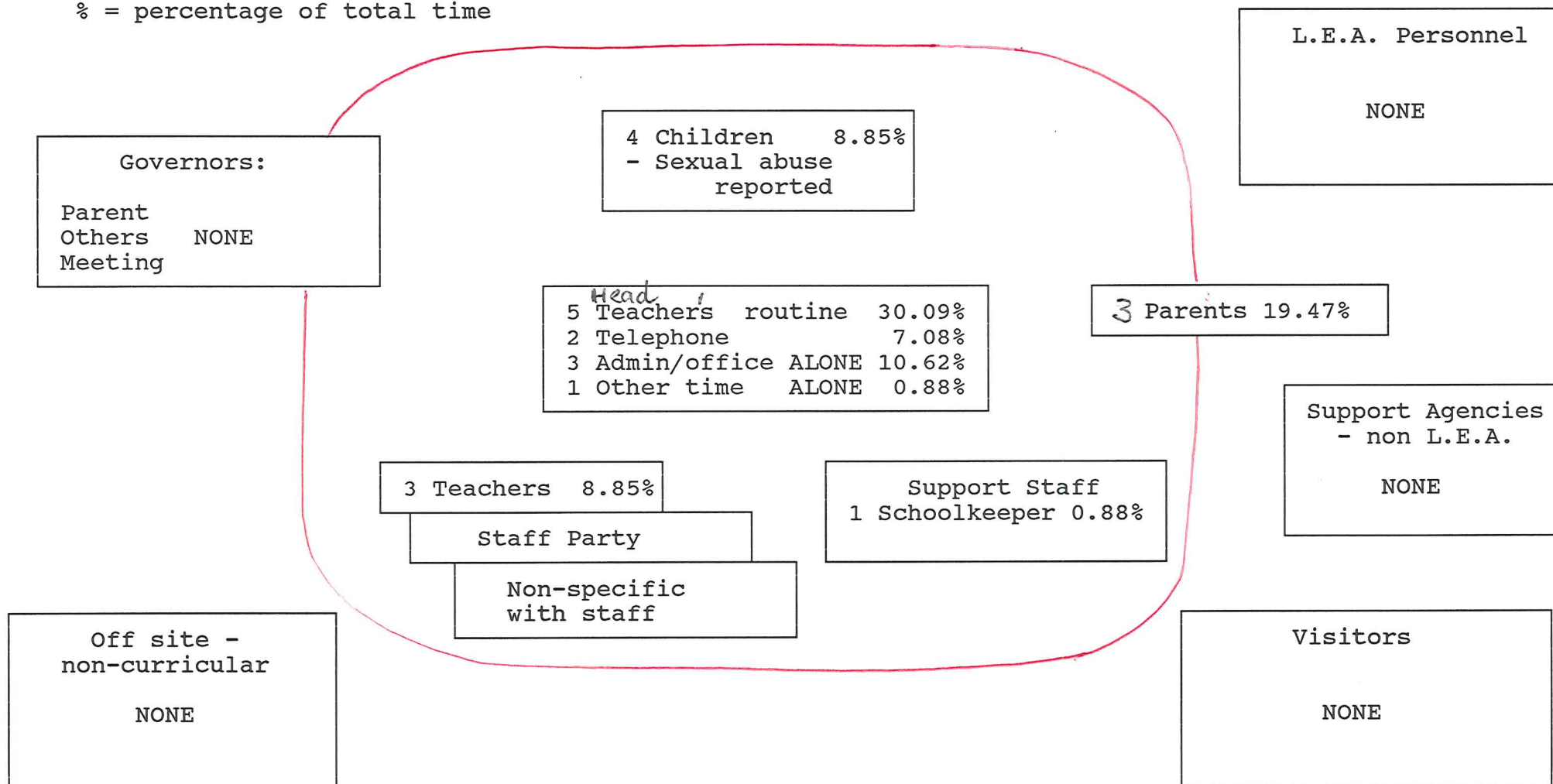
HEADTEACHER 1 Tues.

Total number of activities : 22  
Total time : 565 mins (9:25)

Before 55 Official Hours. 390 After 120

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 75 mins.: 13.28%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time





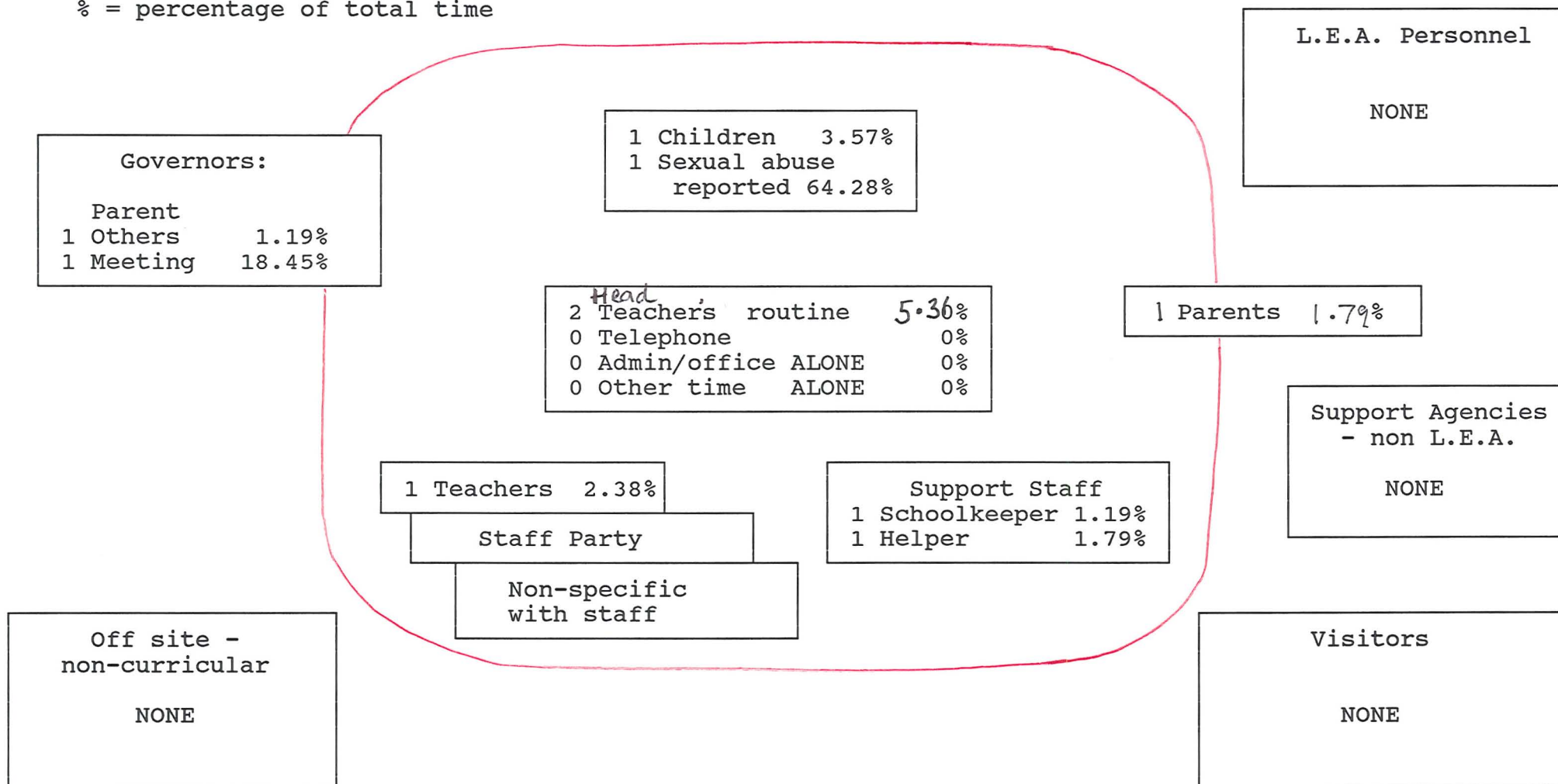
HEADTEACHER 1 Wed.

Total number of activities : 10  
Total time : 840 mins (14 hrs)

Before 55 Official Hours. 390 After 395

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 0 mins.: 0%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time



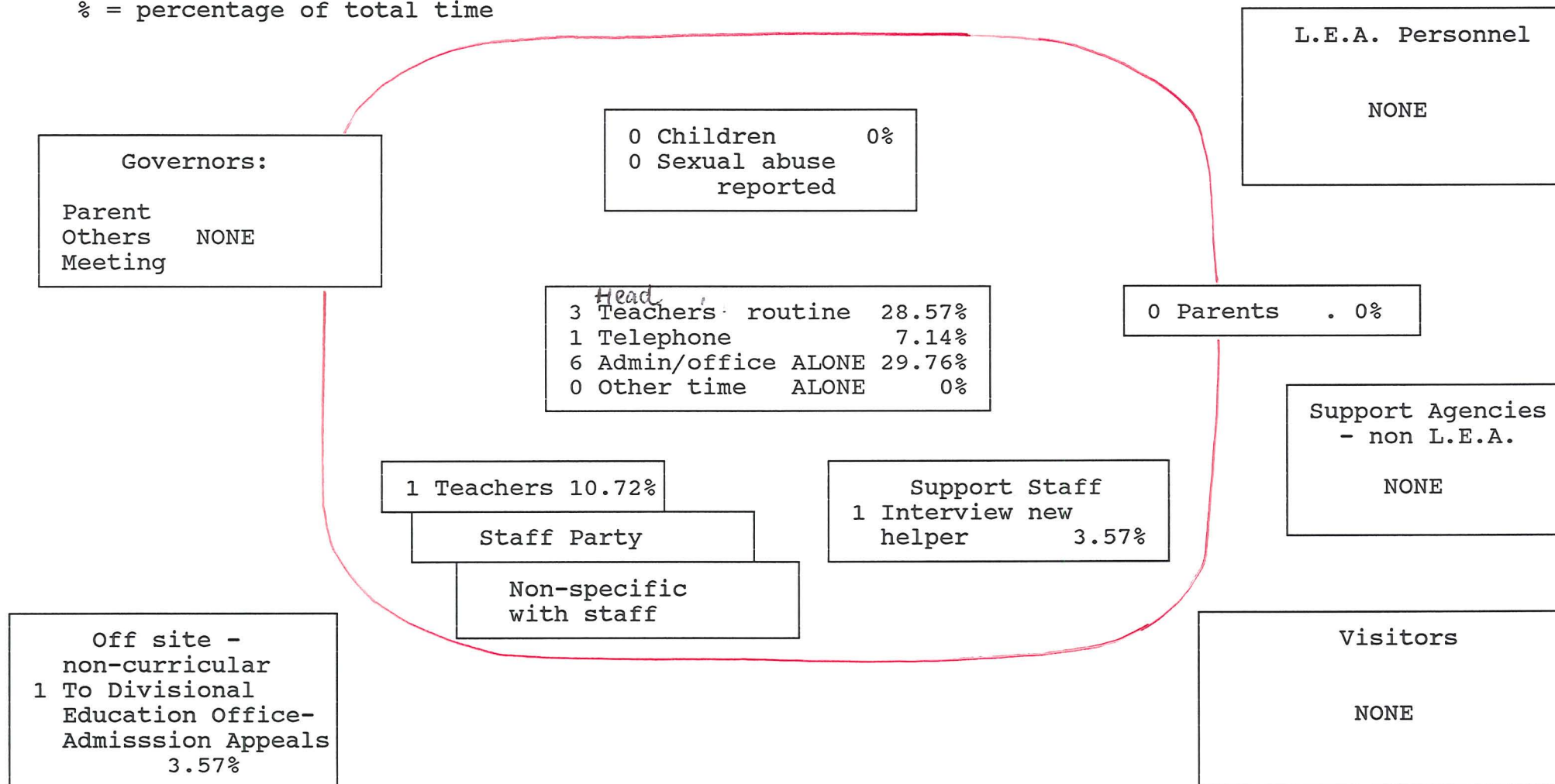
**HEADTEACHER 1 Thurs.**

Total number of activities : 13  
Total time : 420 mins (7 hrs)

Before 30 Official Hours. 390 After

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 70 mins.: 16.67%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time



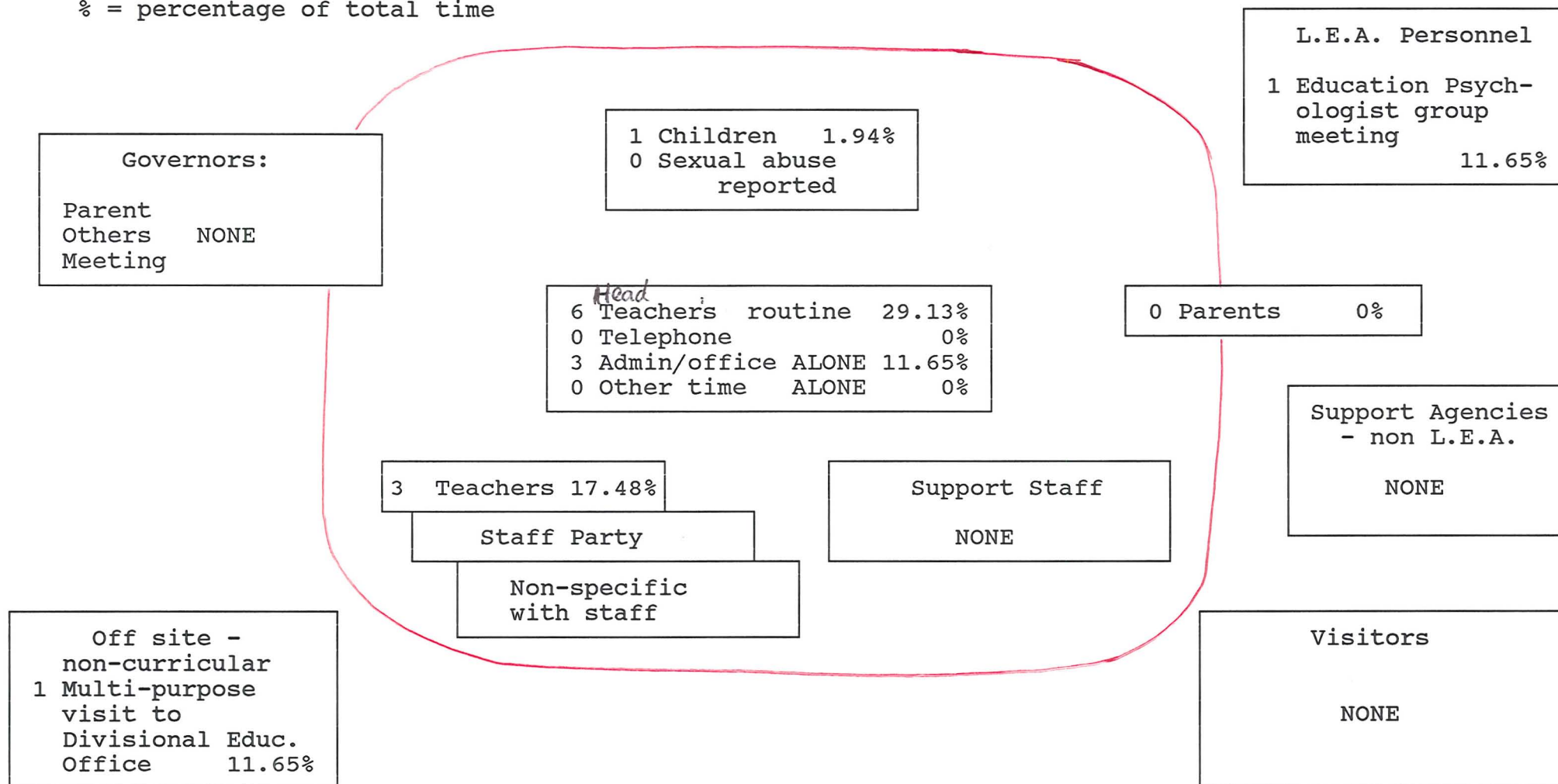
# HEADTEACHER 1 Friday

Total number of activities : 15  
Total time : 515 mins (8:35)

Before 50    Official Hours. 390    After 75

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 85 mins.: 16.50%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time



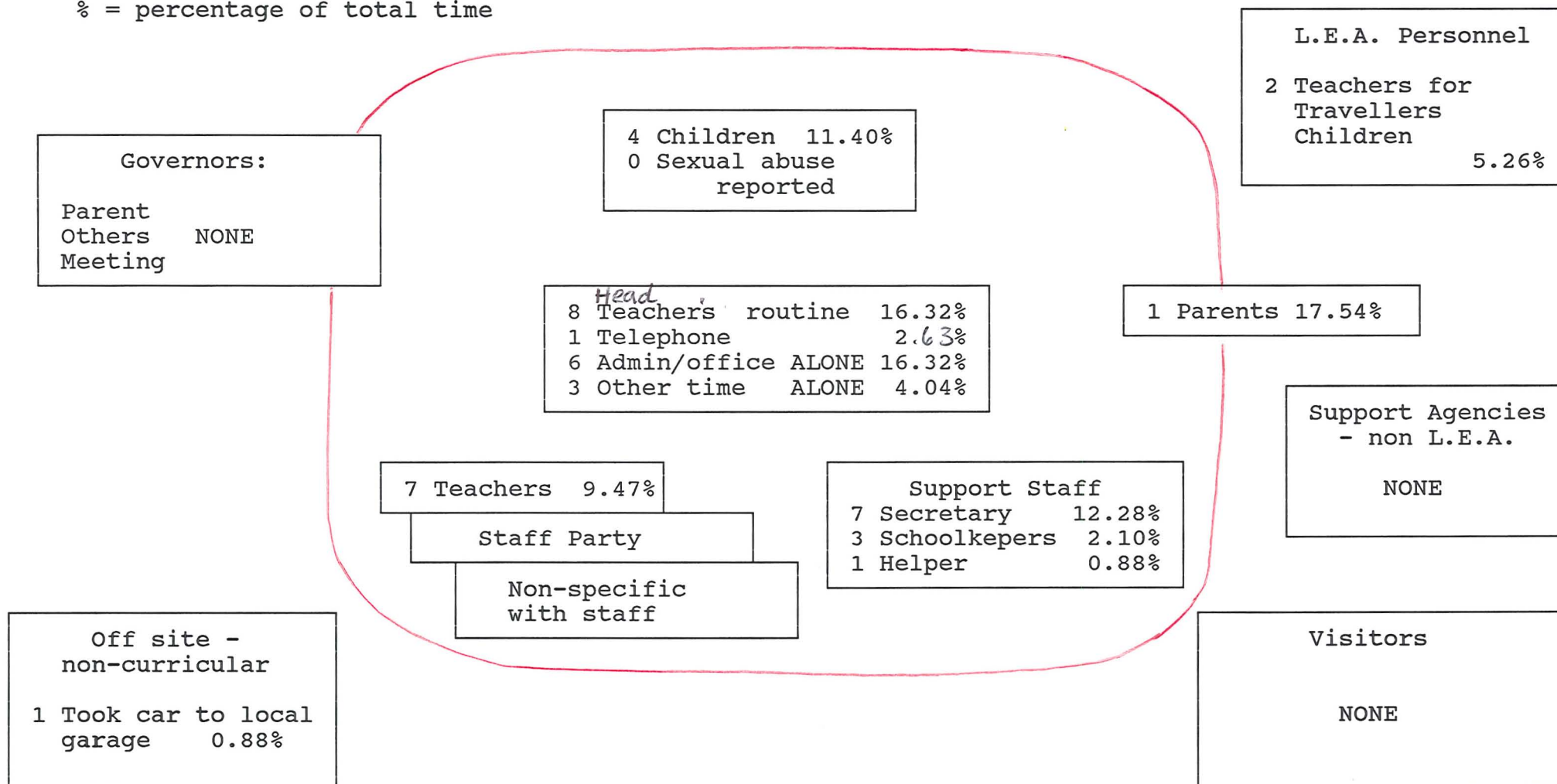
# HEADTEACHER 2 Monday

Total number of activities : 44  
Total time : 570 mins (9:30)

Before 45 Official Hours. 390 After 135

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 5 mins.: 0.88%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time



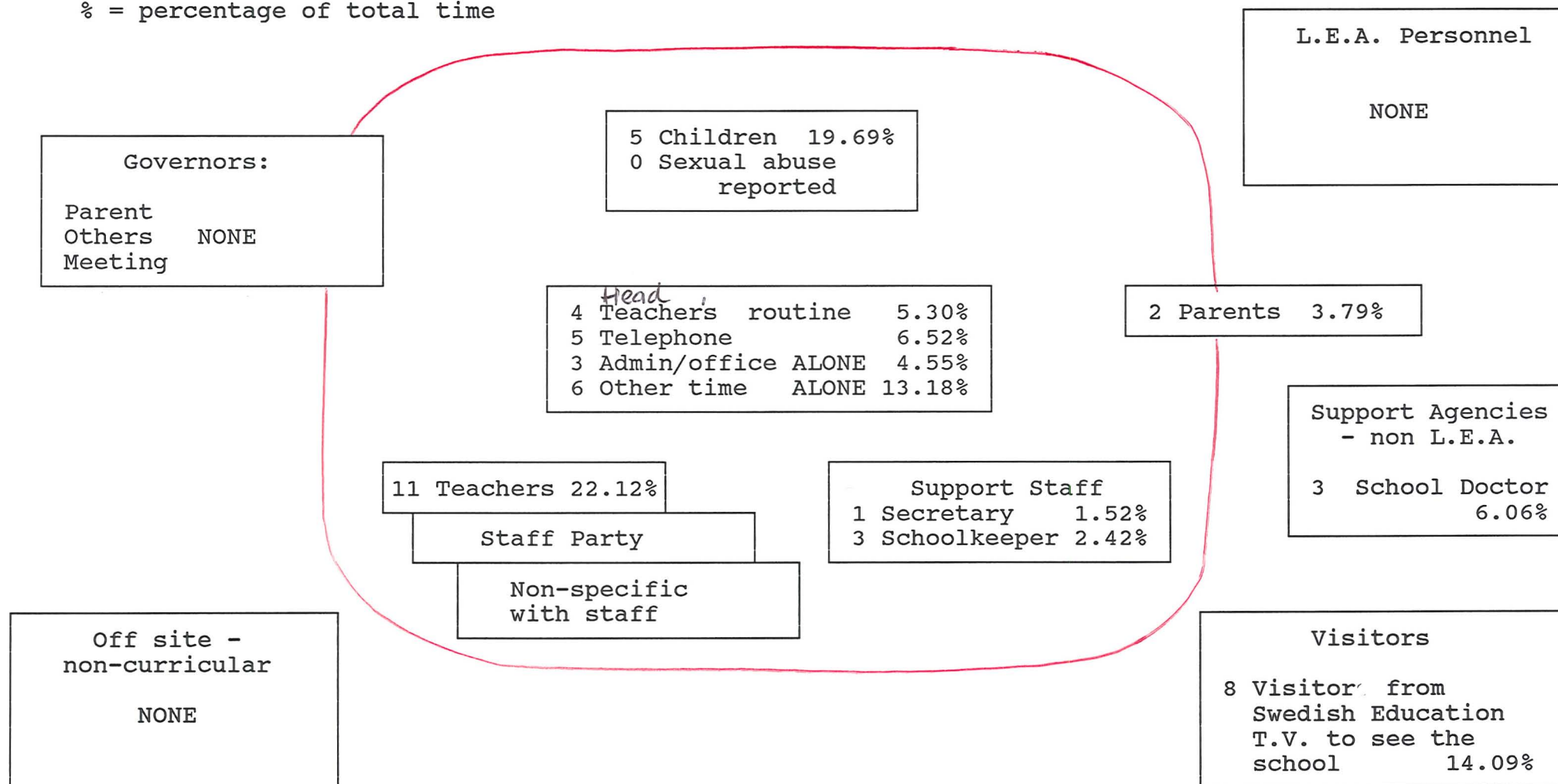
**HEADTEACHER 2 Tues.**

Total number of activities : 51  
Total time : 660 mins (11 hrs)

Before 75    Official Hours. 390    After 195

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 5 mins.: 0.76%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time





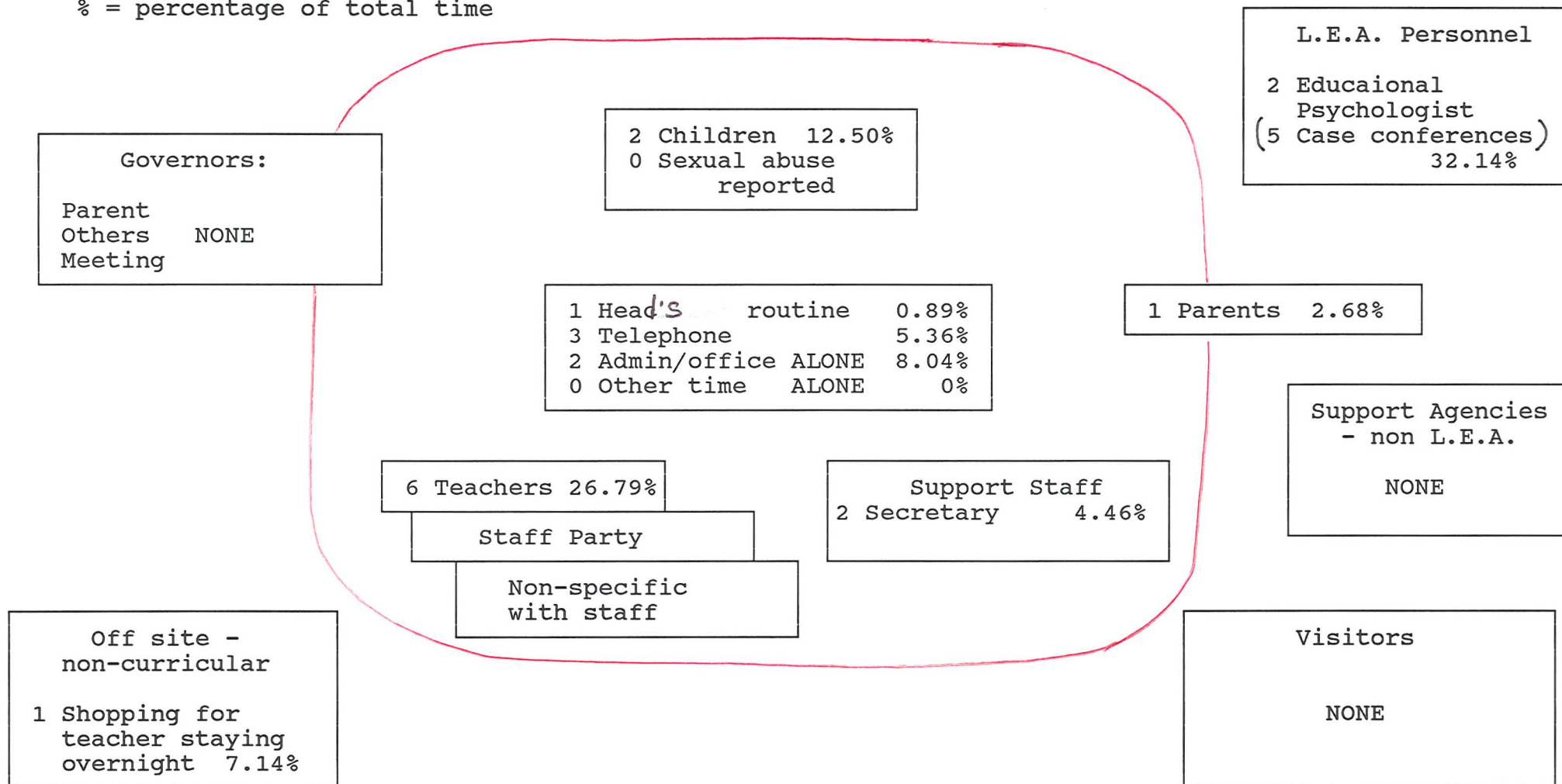
HEADTEACHER 2 Wed.

Total number of activities : 20  
Total time : 560 mins (9:20)

Before 50 Official Hours. 390 After 120

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 0 mins.: 0%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time



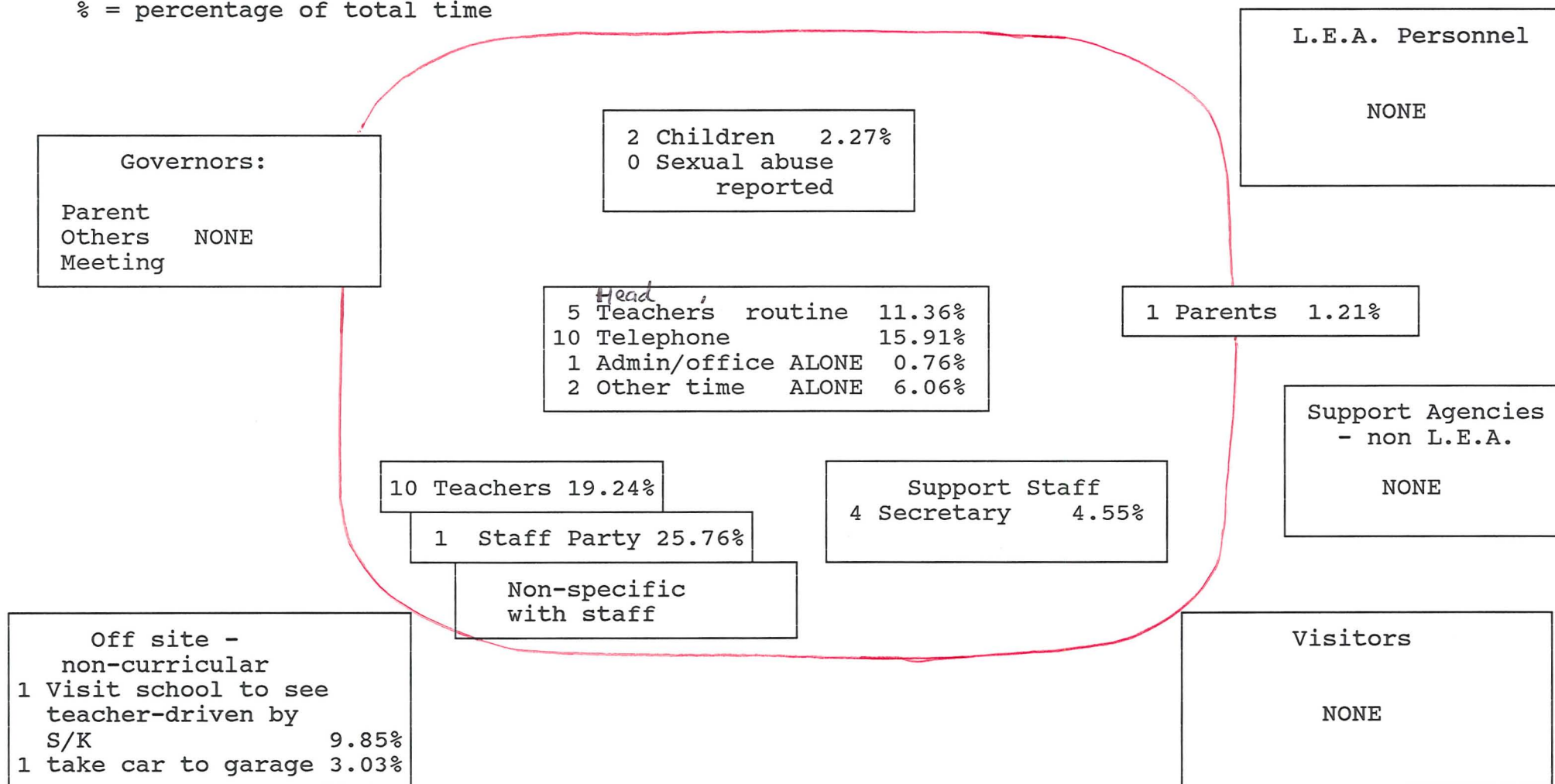
# HEADTEACHER 2 Thurs.

Total number of activities : 38  
Total time : 660 mins (11 hours)

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 0 mins.: 0%

Before 30 Official Hours. 390 After 240

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time



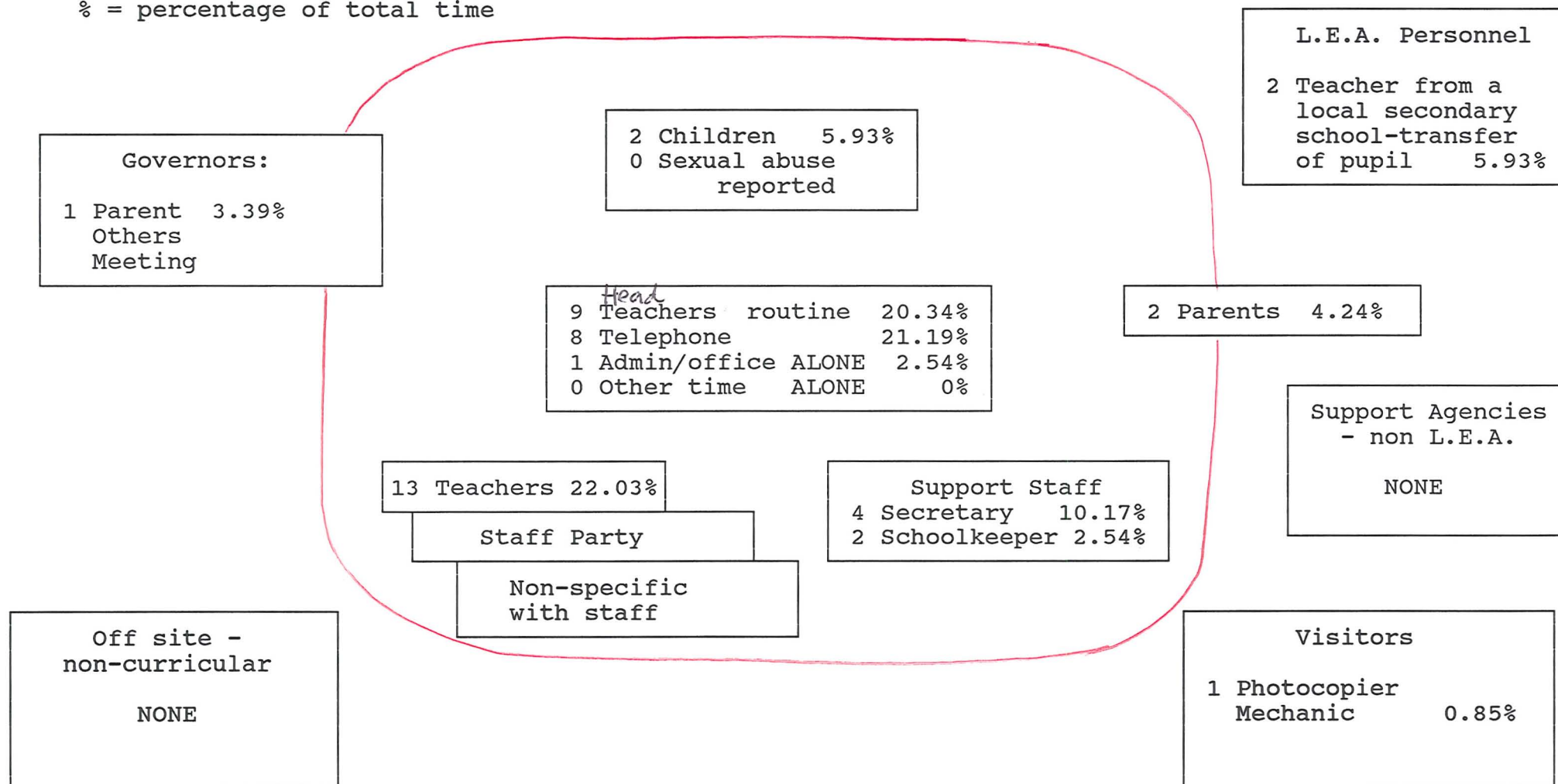
# HEADTEACHER 2 Friday

Total number of activities : 45  
Total time : 590 mins (9:50)

Before 30 Official Hours. 390 After 170

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 5 mins.: 0.85%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time





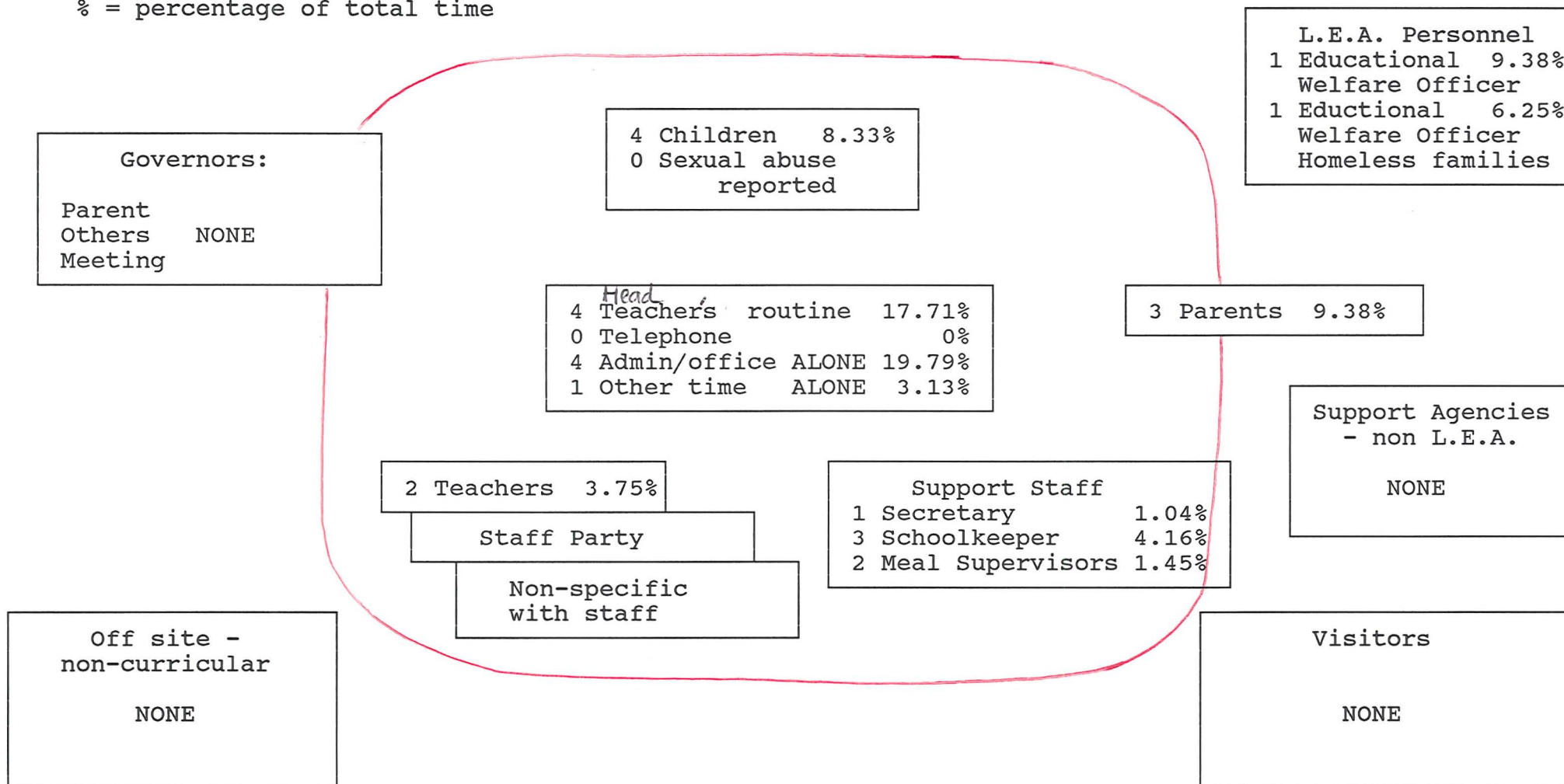
**HEADTEACHER 3 Monday**

Total number of activities : 26  
Total time : 480 mins (8hrs)

Before 0      Official Hours. 405      After 75

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 75 mins.: 15.63%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time



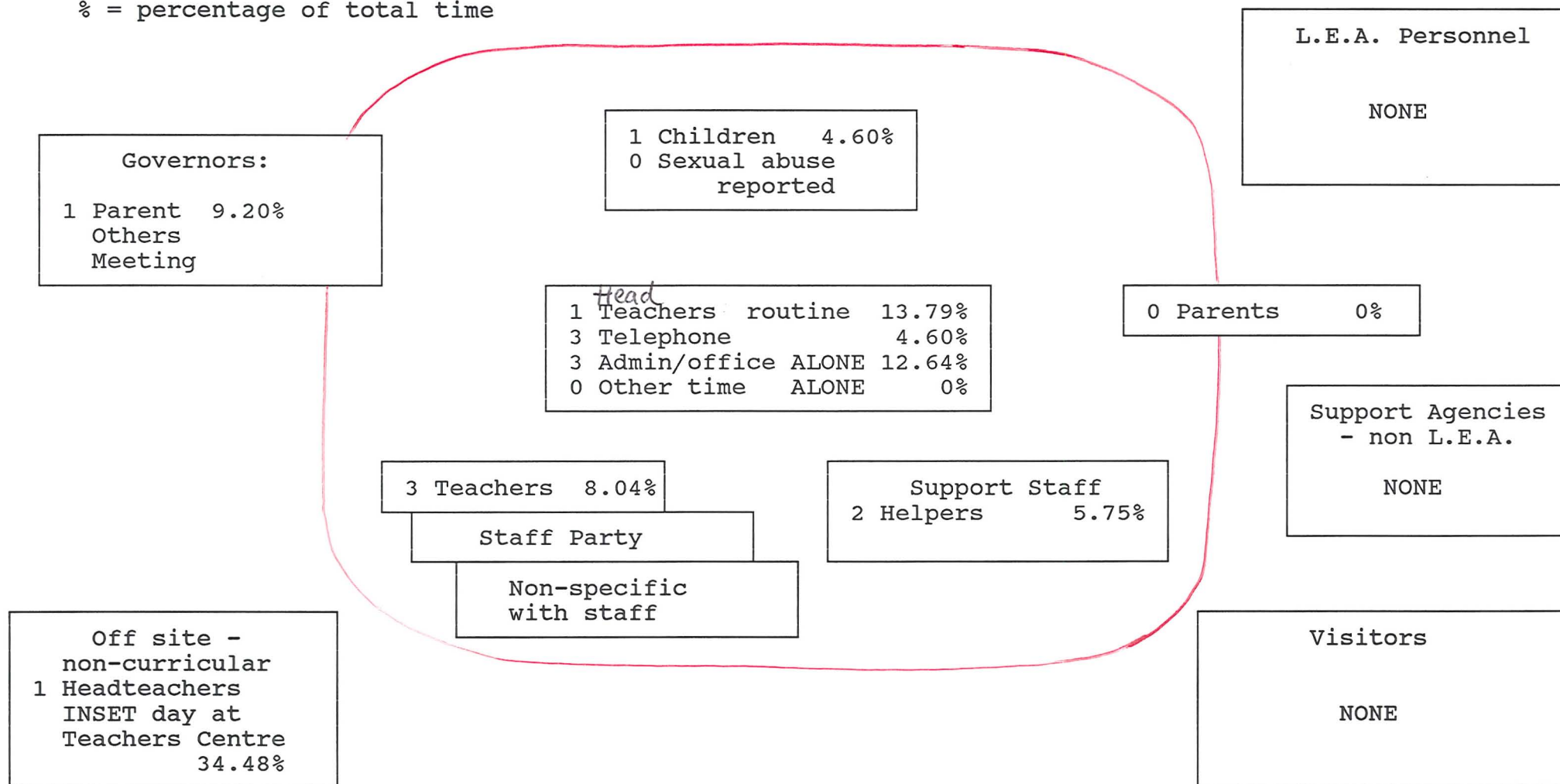
HEADTEACHER 3 Tues.

Total number of activities : 15  
Total time : 435 mins (7.15)

Before 15 Official Hours. 405 After 15

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 30 mins.: 6.90%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time



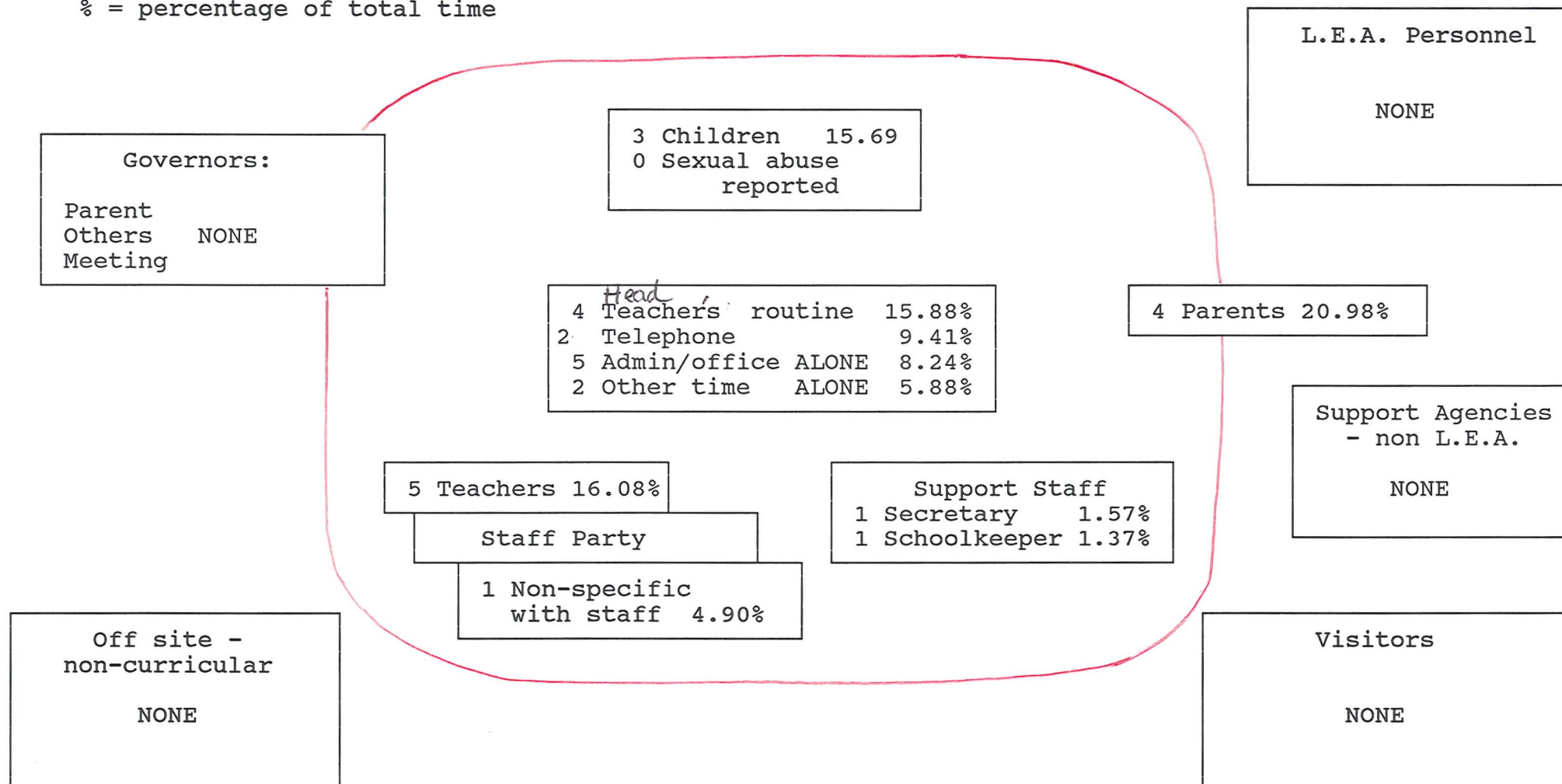
HEADTEACHER 3 Wed.

Total number of activities : 28  
Total time : 510 mins (8:30)

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 0 mins.: 0%

Before 30 Official Hours. 405 After 75

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time



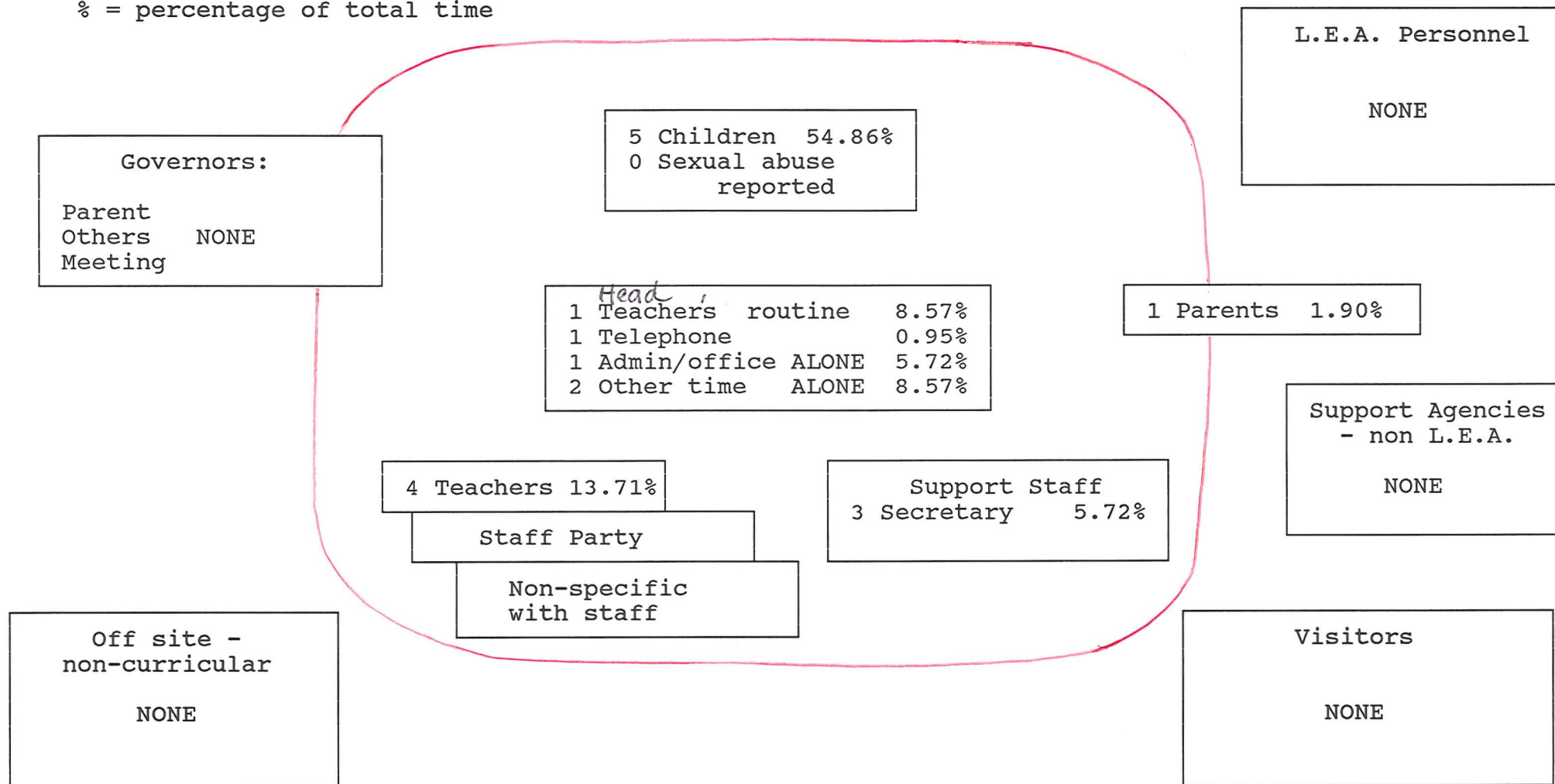
HEADTEACHER 3 Thurs.

Total number of activities : 18  
Total time : 525 mins (8:45)

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 0 mins.: 0%

Before 15 Official Hours. 405 After 105

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time

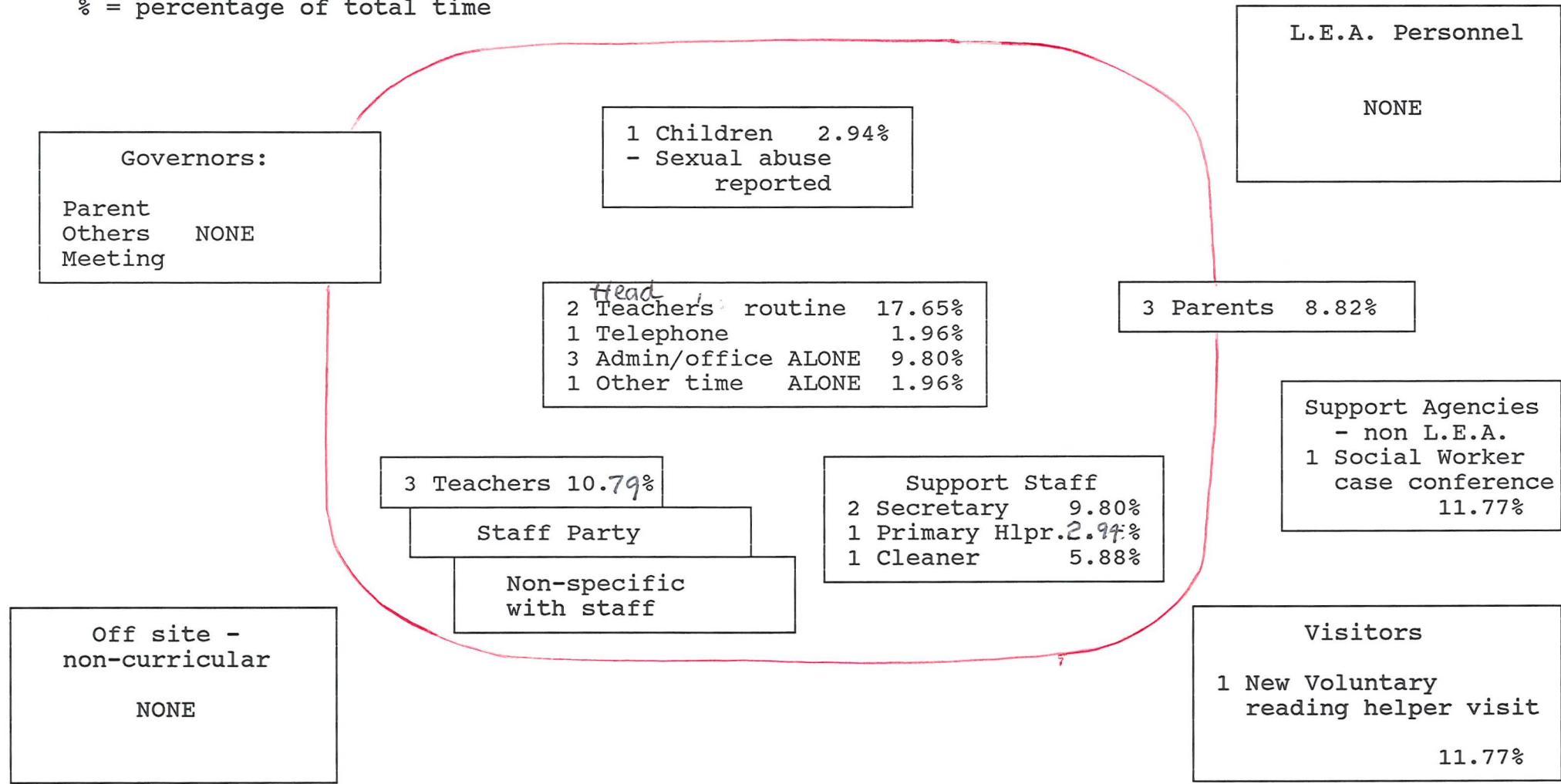


# HEADTEACHER 3 Friday

Total number of activities : 20  
 Total time : 510 mins (8:30)  
 Before 15 Official Hours. 405 After 90

Time not specifically :  
 accounted for : 20 mins.: 3.92%

Figure = number of activities  
 % = percentage of total time





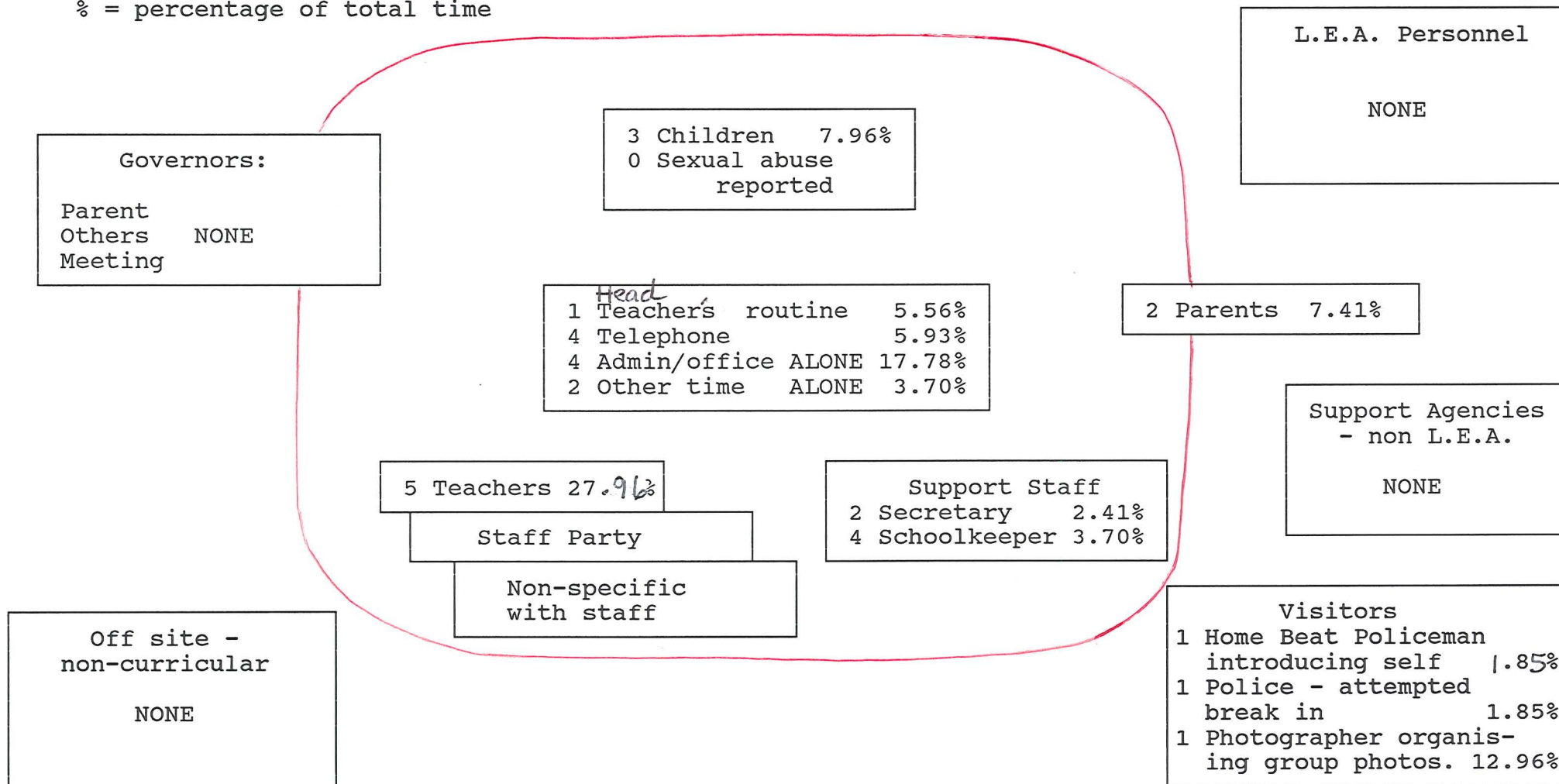
**HEADTEACHER 4 Monday**

Total number of activities : 30  
Total time : 540 mins (9hours)

Before 25 Official Hours. 395 After 120

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 5 mins.: 0.93%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time



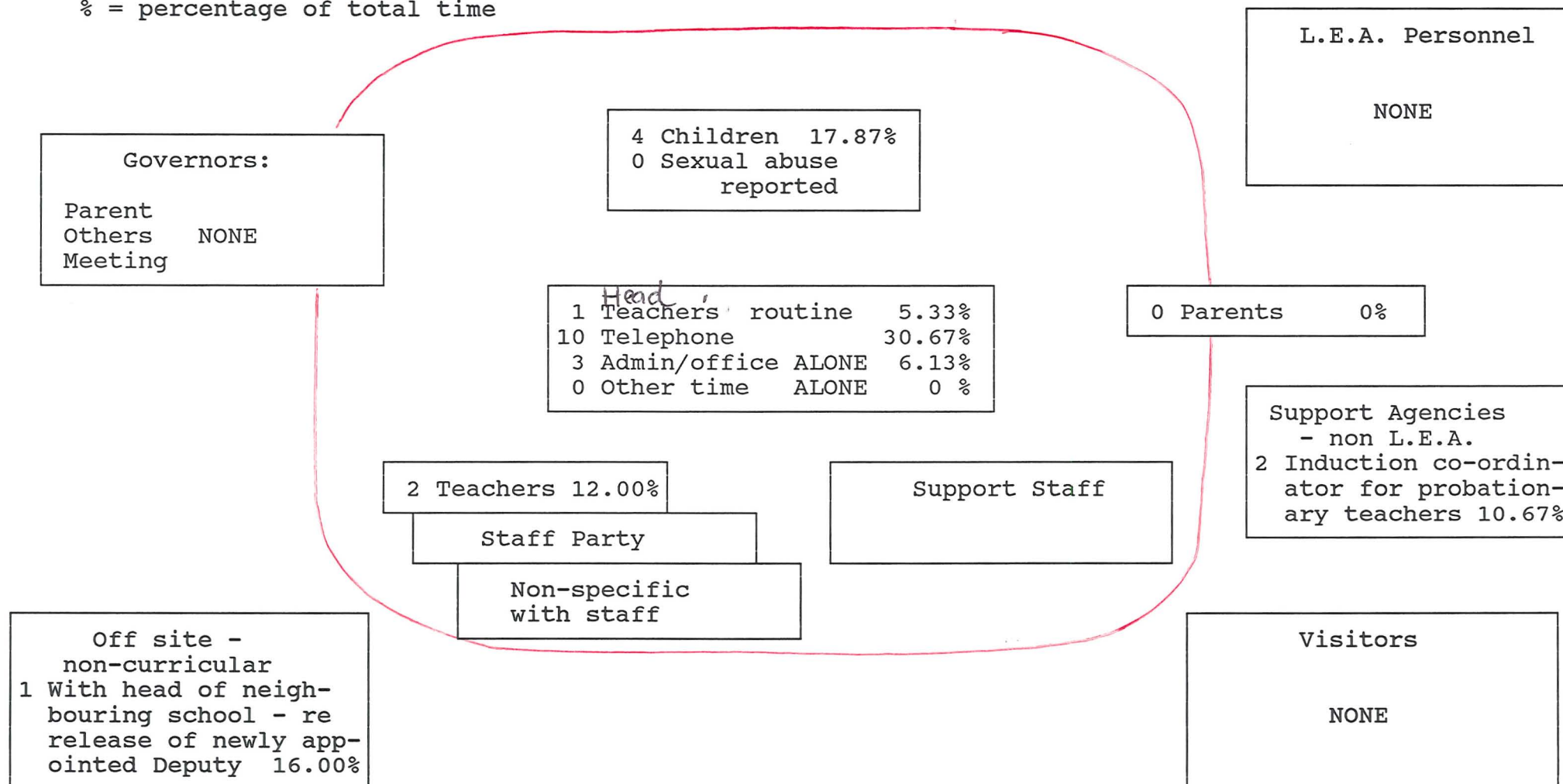
HEADTEACHER 4 Tues.

Total number of activities : 23  
Total time : 375 mins (6:15)

Before 25 Official Hours. 350 After 0

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 5 mins.: 1.33%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time



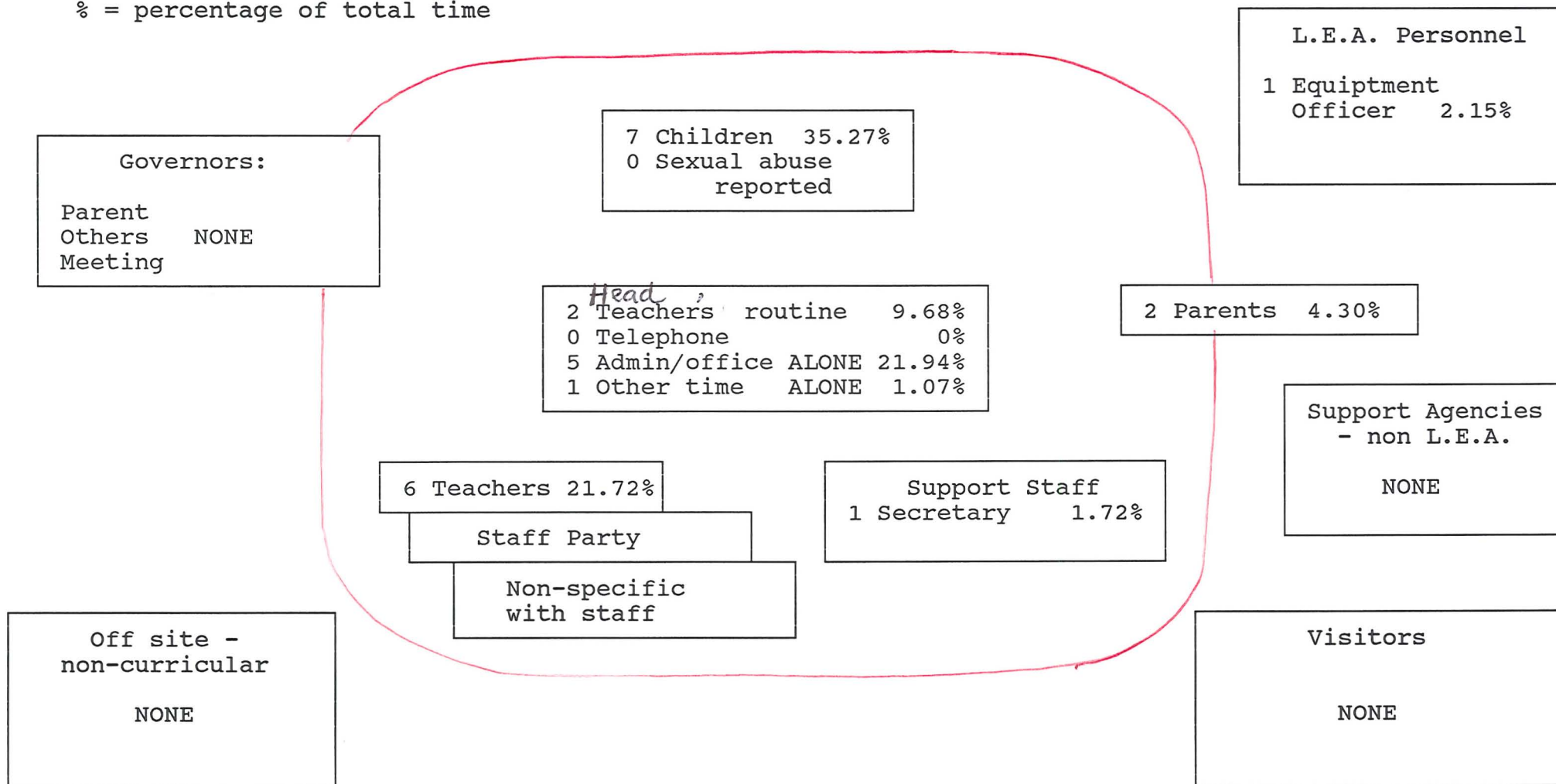
HEADTEACHER 4 Wed.

Total number of activities : 25  
Total time : 465 mins (7:45)

Before 25 Official Hours. 395 After 45

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 10 mins.: 2.15%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time





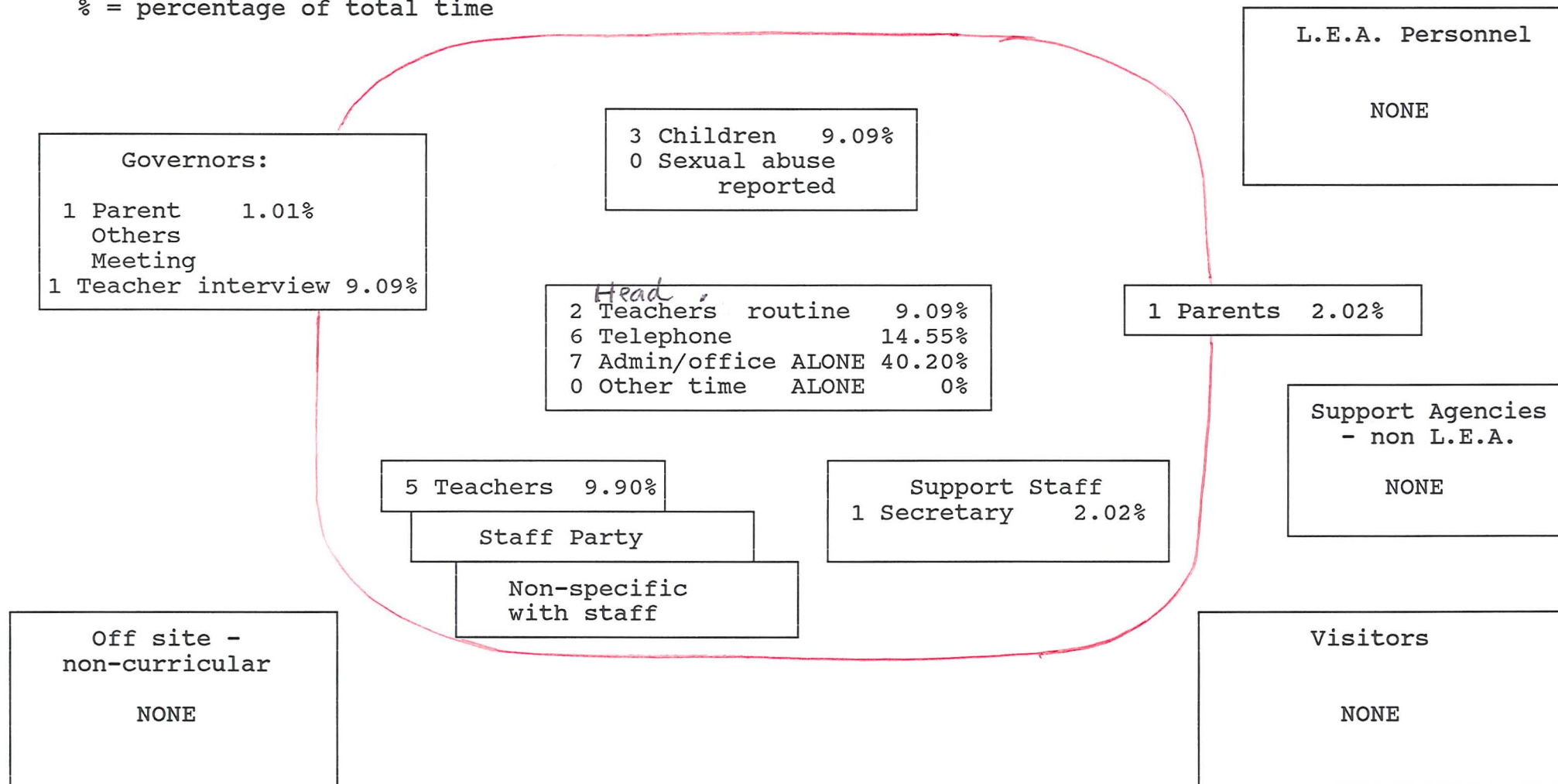
HEADTEACHER 4 Thurs.

Total number of activities : 27  
Total time : 495 mins (8:15)

Before 25 Official Hours. 395 After 75

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 15 mins.: 3.03%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time



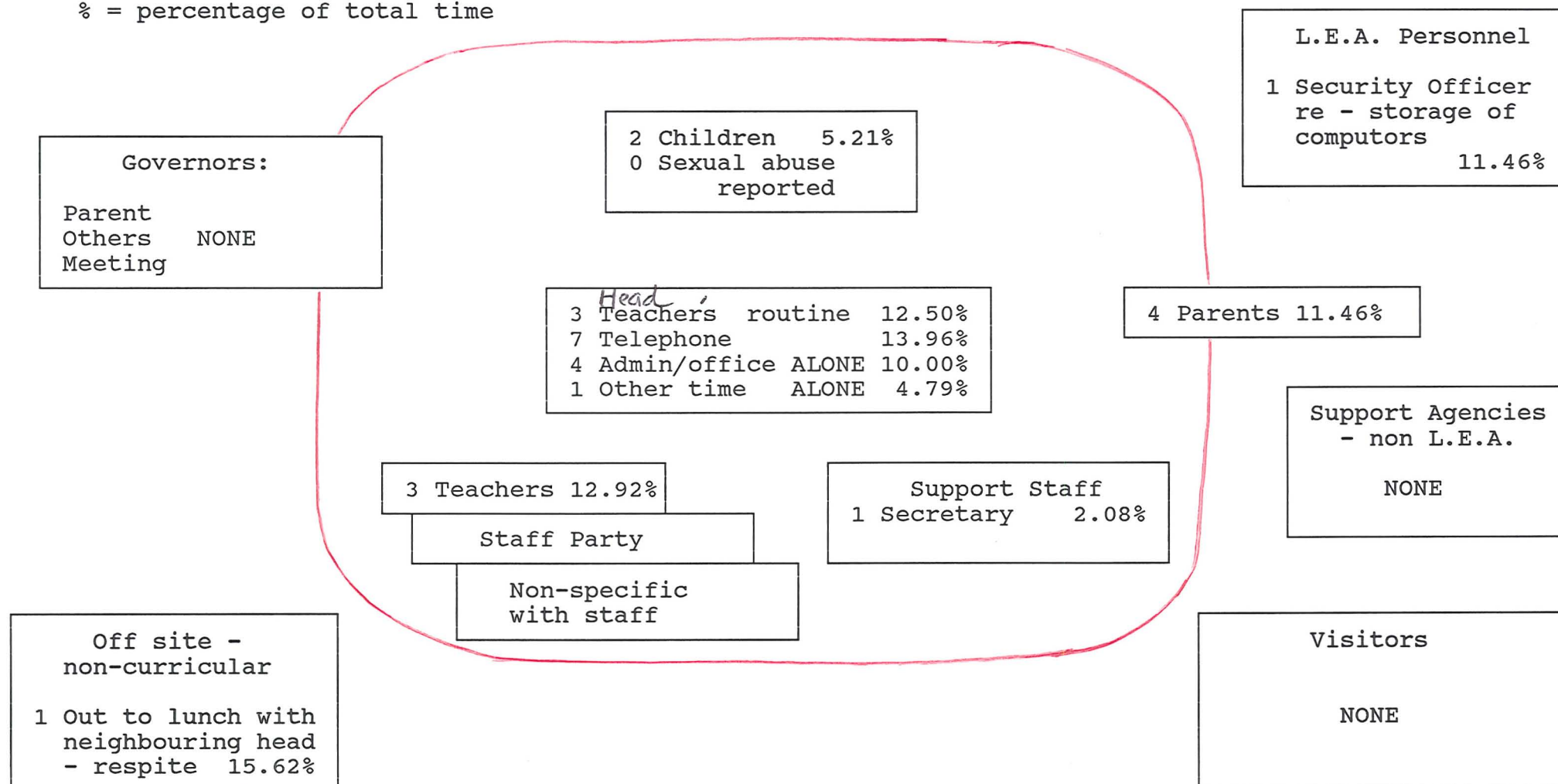
**HEADTEACHER 4 Friday**

Total number of activities : 27  
Total time : 480 mins (8 hrs)

Before 25    Official Hours. 395    After 60

Time not specifically :  
accounted for : 0 mins.: 0%

Figure = number of activities  
% = percentage of total time



### APPENDIX 3

Detailed breakdown of the content of each headteacher's total activities for the five days for which they kept the diaries. The categories and descriptions displayed are basically those used by the headteachers themselves when completing the diary.

# 1 Administration/office - ALONE

	Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
Dealing with mail	4		7	4	15
Routine admin/office (e.g. paperwork forms, tidy desk etc.)	4	12	4	11	31
Admissions { Nursery Admitting Appeals - to school over subscribed	1  1			2	2 1 1
Communication to { Parents General Teachers Industrial Action			1  1	1	2  1
Teaching staff administration	2			4	6
Educational Psychologist administration		1		1	2
School Doctor administration			3		3
Covering school office	2				2
	14	13	16	23	66

## 2 Other time - ALONE

	Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
' Setting up shop' for staff	2				2
Having a break / coffee		4	3	1	8
Having lunch		1	1		2
About the school — Displays Library Checking children collected		1 1		1	1 1 1
Teaching preparation / marking		2	1		3
Searching for keys			1		1
Preparing to go home		1		2	3
Planning for staff meeting		1			1
	2	11	6	4	23

3 Off Site (not with children or teachers, i.e. non-curricular)

	Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
Divisional Education Office	1				1
Admissions					
appeals	1				1
Various					
Neighbouring School		1		1	2
Staffing matters				1	1
Lunch - respite					
Heads In-set course - Teachers Centre			1		1
Car to garage		2			2
Shopping for visiting teacher staying overnight		1			1
	2	4	1	2	9

#### 4 Headteacher routine activities

	Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
<b>Supervising</b>					
Children — on arrival at school — into school after play — off at hometime	2	1 8 1			3 8 1
Assembly — Preparation + cleaning — with children — Preparation - not — specific — Assembly — Children exeting	1 5 2	7 4	2 3	1 4	7 4 16 2
Playground - checking supervision	8	2	1		11
Lunch — and having lunch — not having lunch	5	3 1	5	4	17 1
Touring the school / visiting classes	3				3
Fire drill			1		1
	26	27	12	9	74

# 5 Telephone

		Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
Divisional Education Office	Teaching staff	-	3	1	4	8
	Support staff				1	1
	Not specified/ various	1			1	2
Teachers	Absence	1				1
	Obtaining Supply Cover	1				1
	Recruitment		5	1	4	10
	Resignation withdrawal		1			1
Support staff - Nursery Assistant absence		1				1
Parents	Child's behaviour		1		1	2
	Explaining children's absence				1	1
	Teacher shortage		1			1
	Wanting transfer		1			1
Governors					2	2
Miscellaneous						
	Headteacher/researcher reminder		1	1		2
	M.S. School transfer of pupil		1			1
	L.R.S. Nursery booklet		1			1
	North London Polytechnic		1			1
L.E.A. Personnel	Ed. Pshchologist			1	1	2
	Educational Welfare Officer				2	2
	Library Adviser				1	1
	Nursery Adviser				1	1
Support Agencies	School Doctor			1		1
	Social Services (parental marital problem)				2	2
	Health Centre	1				1
Curriculum - Swimming Baths				1		1



5. Telephone continued :

Supporting INSET	Maths	3			3
	Study Loan collection	2			2
	L. D. T.			1	1
L.E.A Promotion Exhibition			1		1
Friend seeking personal support				2	2
Headteachers' Action Committee		2			2
Personal and gossip		3			3
Other not-specific	2	1		3	6
	7	27	7	27	68

## 6 Teachers

	Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
Staff meetings				2	2
└ Whole staff					
└ Group/team		1			1
└ Planning, with a teacher		1			1
Deputy Head					
└ General organisation/ routine	1	3	4	3	11
└ Teachers - staffing		3			3
└ Children	1	1			2
└ Admission appeals	1				1
General organisation/routine matters		18	5	5	28
Greeting informally chatting /listening	3	2	2	2	9
Recruitment					
└ Resignation		1			1
└ Maternity leave				1	1
Covering absent teachers	1	3	2		6
Children					
└ Discussing class/individual children				3	3
└ Behavioural matters		2		2	4
└ Special needs	1	3		1	5
└ Medicals		1			1
└ Secondary transfer matters		1			1
└ Not specific		1			1
In-set and staff development matters		1	2		3
Classroom practice		1			1
Curriculum matters	1	2			3
Personal Support		1			1
Industrial Action			1		1
Break with teachers			1		1
Other, not specific	2	1		2	5
	11	47	17	21	96

## 7 Support Staff

	Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
Secretary	1	18	5	4	28
<div> <div></div> <div>Routine</div> <div>Personal support</div> <div>Chatting/coffee</div> </div>			1	1	1
			1	1	2
Schoolkeeper	3	7	3	4	17
<div> <div></div> <div>Maintenance/routine</div> <div>Possible industrial action</div> </div>		1	1		2
Helpers		1	2		3
<div> <div></div> <div>Routine</div> <div>Recruiting</div> <div>Chatting/coffee</div> </div>	1				1
	1		1		2
Meals supervisor - covering absence			2		2
Cleaner - personal problem			1		1
	6	27	17	9	59

## 8 Children

		Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
Seeing children not in class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General chat</li> <li>Bad behaviour</li> <li>Good work</li> <li>Sick/injured child</li> <li>Distressed child</li> <li>Lost property</li> <li>Not specific</li> </ul>	1	5	2	1	1
			1		3	10
				3	4	4
				1	1	4
				1		1
					1	1
						2
Visiting classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Giving information</li> <li>Seeing work/events</li> <li>Promoting safety and good behaviour</li> <li>Observing lesson</li> <li>Not specific</li> </ul>	1	1		1	2
			1		2	3
		1		1		2
		2		1		1
						2
Educational outings		1				1
Teaching as planned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>group/class/combined classes for a given period</li> <li>Class for whole day (recorded as 4 activities)</li> </ul>		5	1	5	11
				4		4
Covering for a short period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher late</li> <li>Teacher absent</li> <li>Splitting class</li> <li>Release teacher briefly</li> </ul>	1	1			1
		1	1			1
				2		2
						2
		7	15	14	19	55

# 9a Parents

	Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
About his/her child					
Child's progress		1	1	1	3
Behaviour			1	1	2
Being bullied	1				1
Not specific		1			1
Informal chats			2	1	3
Routine information		1		2	3
Prospective parents to look round school	4				4
Admisssion enrolment	2				2
school nursery			1		1
Meeting new parents (nursery children			1		1
Secondary school transfer		1			1
Parents' concern - teacher shortage next term		1		3	4
Marital problems				1	1
Concern over Head's back injury			1		1

Continuation from previous page

		Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
Members of P.T.A. & Parents' Committee	News magazine			1		1
	Bring & buy sale		1			1
	Summer event			1		1
	Spring assembly			1		1
	Not specific		1			1
Not specific		1		1		2
		8	7	11	9	35

## 10 Governors

	Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
Chair — Forthcoming meetings — Chairing panel for teacher interview	1			1	1
Parent Governor — Tirading about suspected harrassment among children — arrange meeting for parents — Teacher shortage next term		1	1	1	1 1 1
Governors' meeting	1				1
	2	1	1	2	6

11 L.E.A. Personnel (i.e. coming into school)

	Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
Educational Psychologist	1	1			2
		1			1
Educational Welfare Officer (families with problems)			1		1
Educational Welfare Officer for Homeless Families			1		1
Teacher for Travellers' Children		2			2
Secondary School Teacher (pupil transferring)		2			2
Induction Officer				2	2
Equipment Officer				1	1
Security Officer (storage of computers)				1	1
	1	6	2	4	13



12 Support Agencies

	Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
School Doctor (Medicals)		3			3
Social Worker (case conference on Nursery child)			1		1
		3	1		4

### 13 Other Visitors

	Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
Home Beat Policeman Visiting				1	1
Police - attempted break-in				1	1
Rank Xerox - engineer to fix photocopier		1			1
Voluntary Reading Helper - visiting			1		1
Swedish Teacher Visiting		8			8
Photographer				1	1
		9	1	3	13

14 Sexual Abuse reported by 2 girls Headteacher 1 Wednesday 540 minutes

	Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
Sexual abuse reported by 2 girls: involving social services, Police, Doctors, school staff and girls' irate father, who threatened <u>Headteacher 1</u> and W.P.C. had to send for back-up officers	1				1

15 Staff Party Headteacher 2 Thursday 170 minutes

	Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
Staff Party 4.40 to 7.30 pm		1			1

16 Non-specific activity with other staff Headteacher 3 Wednesday 25 minutes

	Headteacher 1	Headteacher 2	Headteacher 3	Headteacher 4	
Trouble shooting (Crisis Management) Teacher away and not coming back; decided to exclude class.			1		1